Lighter-Skinned and Beautiful? Investigating Shadeism Amongst South Asian Women in Canada

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ABSTRACT

The current study explored shadeism (i.e., prejudice based on skin shade) within interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts amongst South Asian women living in Canada. Phase I consisted of an online survey with 169 women from South Asian ethnicities and living in Canada. These women responded to measures assessing perceptions of their skin tones, mental health, body image, appearance-related attitudes, and bicultural identity integration. Phase II involved virtual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 13 South Asian women living in Canada, who narrated their experiences and implications of shadeism in interpersonal, social, and cultural settings. In Phase I, the hypotheses were not supported. However, darker skin tone evaluation and frequency of skin-lightening practices significantly correlated with negative perceptions of one's appearance, appearance-fixing tendencies, and bicultural identity integration. Using reflexive thematic analysis, four broad themes were derived from the interview data in Phase II: 1) colonial origins of shadeism; 2) experiences of shadeism (i.e., interpersonal, social, and cultural spaces, media portrayals, and intersections of shadeism with other forms of oppression [e.g., racism]); 3) protective factors against shadeism (e.g., coping, resilience, and resistance; older age and maturity; interpersonal support; living in Canada; and having a bicultural identity); and 4) outcomes of shadeism on perceptions of skin tone, skin-lightening practices, and psychological wellbeing. The limitations and future implications of this study are discussed.

Keywords: Shadeism, South Asian women, Canada, interpersonal, cultural

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Shadeism is defined as "prejudice based on skin shade and the way it intersects with sexism to disempower women of colour" (Dhillon, 2016, p. 1). Shadeism fortifies sexist gender discourses that evaluate women solely based on their physical appearance; as such, darker-skinned women are typically marginalized for their skin complexion in various social spheres and institutions (e.g., career and marriage, respectively), whereas their lighter-skinned counterparts are often privileged in these spaces for conforming to idealized feminine beauty standards. Shadeism originates from ethnic notions of beauty ideals that are supported by white supremacy, and serves to privilege lighter skin shades as a form of social and economic capital (Glenn, 2008; Jha & Andelman, 2009; Tate & Fink, 2019).

Based on shadeist narratives that depict lighter complexions as synonymous with higher social class, ideal femininity, and beauty, researchers have explored shadeism as a body image[1] issue amongst women of colour, particularly those who are from Black, Latin American, Hispanic, and/or Asian ethnic communities (Dixon & Telles, 2017). In order to attain idealized beauty standards, results indicated that women of colour would attempt to lighten their complexions in an effort to become fairer-skinned and possibly accrue the rewards and benefits (e.g., receipt of romantic attention, career assistance; and be viewed as an object of sexual appeal amongst peers) associated with having a fairer skin tone (Hunter, 2011; Stephen & Fernandez, 2012). According to Harper and Choma (2019), it is the internalization of the power of whiteness that amplifies South Asian women's dissatisfaction with their skin and leads to concomitant scrutiny and bleaching of their complexions (Harper & Choma, 2019). For South Asian women who do not live in their homelands, negotiation of their ethnic and the host country's cultural

values influences how they respond to shadeism in their ethnic communities (Anand, 2009; Goel, 2019).

The purpose of the present thesis is to investigate shadeism experienced by South Asian women (i.e., Afghani, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Maldivian, Nepali, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan) who live in Canada. With the exception of two studies (Dhillon, 2016; and Sahay & Piran, 1997), there is a paucity of literature on shadeism from the perspective of South Asian women living in a Canadian context. Further, in light of the pressing health implications associated with the use of skin-lightening products, South Asian women, specifically those aged 16-35 years, continue to represent the largest base of consumers within the global skin-lightening industry (Glenn, 2008; Khan, 2018, April 23; Shankar & Subish, 2007). Consequently, the intentions of the present thesis are to examine how skin tone evaluation and skin-lightening practices are associated with South Asian Canadian women's body image and other appearance-related attitudes, their bicultural identity integration, and mental health. Also explored are South Asian Canadian women's experiences of shadeism within interpersonal (e.g., family, friends, and romantic partners), social (e.g., school, workplace, media, and other public spaces such as beauty salons and shopping malls), and cultural contexts (e.g., South Asian Canadian communities and white-dominant spaces), and the implications of these experiences for their psychological wellbeing and identity.

Importantly, the term "shadeism" was selected for use throughout the thesis to refer to South Asian women's experiences of prejudice and discrimination based on their skin tone. Dhillon (2016) emphasizes that shadeism is a more appropriate term to use, and one that maps onto the intentions of the present thesis, as it does not appropriate the race-based struggles of Black communities where the term "colourism" would be more suitable. In all, this study

investigates and documents white beauty ideals in South Asian Canadian communities and was designed to encourage greater awareness of shadeism. In the next section, a brief review of the literature on the historical contributions to shadeism, from a global and South Asian perspective, is presented.

Literature Review

Historical Perspectives on Shadeism

The preference for skin tones to be "light" originated from Western slavery, ideologies of white supremacy, and colonization of non-white communities, such as Black, Latin American, Hispanic, and Asian, by Europeans (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Mishra, 2015). During the slavery era in the United States, Black individuals experienced prejudice on the basis of their skin colour, and were discriminatorily treated. Comparatively, biracial or "Black-White" (i.e., born to Black female slaves and their White owners) individuals accrued benefits insofar as greater economic provision, different occupational trajectories, greater income, and educational opportunities because of their White parentage. When Black-White individuals married within their own biracial group, the privileges accorded lighter-skinned persons were intergenerationally transmitted and compounded, perpetuating the view of whiteness as the "norm" to which everyone wanted to conform (Dixon & Telles, 2017).

In Latin American and Hispanic communities, skin colour was perceived synonymously with race, such that Spanish and Portuguese colonizers viewed themselves to be at the top of the racial hierarchy, and Indigenous and Black populations were perceived to occupy the lower rungs. In Asian communities, shadeism intersected with classism (i.e., prejudice based on social class) after European colonization, as the colonizers categorized darker-skinned individuals as belonging to lower socioeconomic statuses (Dixon & Telles, 2017).

In 1857, the British invaded India, the largest South Asian subcontinent. Perceiving themselves to be a superior race, the British colonizers relegated the Eastern world that included South Asia to the status of "Other" (i.e., something that signifies an alien or subordinate; Said, 1978). British colonizers also exercised their imperialist power to erase Indian culture and history, and, in so doing, encouraged the use of the English language, English mannerisms, and accompanying attire (Cohn, 1996; Said, 1978). Native Indians were classified as primitive, inferior, and of "lower" social class, and were coerced or forced to become labourers. The native Indians' work took place predominantly outside in the sun, and, as such, produced complexions on these workers that were darker in tone. As a result, these individuals experienced racial segregation, skin colour stratification, and their darker skin colours were ultimately associated with poverty, filth, dirt, and destruction (Hussain, 2010; Spurr, 1993; Torgovnick, 1990).

Skin colour emerged as a critical social symbol, as the ruling class had fairer skin tones than most of the local Indian population (Mishra, 2015). Skin tones that were lighter became crucial components of postcolonial notions of beauty in South Asia, and the worldwide multibillion-dollar skin-lightening industry was born (Goon & Craven, 2003; Hussein, 2010).

Skin-Lightening Industry and its Impact on South Asian Communities

According to Statista, the global skin-lightening market is $4.8BN USD in size, and forecasted to reach $8.9BN USD by the year 2027 (Shahbandeh, 2020, January 22). Multinational companies reckon that India, the largest nation in South Asia, would remain a central zone for the skin-lightening industry, as India has witnessed economic growth, particularly amongst the urban middle-class (Runkle, 2004).

Launched by Hindustan (Indian) Unilever in 1975, *Fair and Lovely* (renamed recently as *Glow and Lovely*)[2] is an immensely popular skin-lightening cream amongst South Asian women

around the globe, and propagates the perception that darker-skinned women can control the colour of their complexions (Li et al., 2008). Although *Fair and Lovely* is not officially marketed to Canadian shoppers[3], numerous Indo-Canadian grocery stores sell the company's products to South Asian women (Dhillon, 2016). Besides *Fair and Lovely*, skin-lightening products that are banned under safety regulations for their health risks are illegally sold to African, Asian, and Caribbean diasporic communities in Canadian beauty supply stores (Khan, 2018, April 23; Tomlinson et al., 2020, February 7). The skin-lightening products alleviate dark spots and purportedly equalize one's skin tone by preventing the production of melanin, which occurs because the products contain harmful chemicals, such as hydroquinone, mercury, and topical corticosteroids. When women come in contact with detrimental and unsafe chemicals in skin-lightening products for prolonged periods of time, they may experience side effects such as skin irritation, weakening, and deterioration; skin rashes and scarring; burning and discolouration; decreased ability to fight infection; mercury poisoning; and skin cancer (Khan, 2018; April 23; Tomlinson et al., 2020, February 7). Although skin-lightening products have health risks, their popularity in South Asian communities is increasing, as evinced by media support of lighter-skinned women in South Asia.

Objectification of Lighter Skin Tone in South Asia

Popular media in South Asia commercialize white beauty ideals that serve to reinforce a desire for lighter skin complexions, and pressure women to use skin-lightening products, which shape their idealized self-images (Belk & Pollay, 1985). *Objectification theory* explains the way women trivialize themselves by constructing their self-images based on how they "fit in" to sociocultural ideals and embody lighter complexions. Accordingly, women engage in *self-*

objectification by internalizing an observer's perspective toward the self (Daniel & Gillen, 2015; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Researchers have analyzed how South Asian popular media sources (e.g., magazines and advertisements) dismiss women because of the stigma associated with darker complexions. For example, McLoughlin (2017) analyzed the content of South Asian women's magazines, and found that the magazines promoted an idealized female beauty aesthetic that is based on Western standards (e.g., "blonde-haired and fair-skinned, with a slim, toned body," p. 83) under the facade of promoting the image of a modern progressive and successful woman. Santhirasegaram (2013) contends that skin-lightening advertisements "disempower women by reducing their self-worth to their physical appearance, more specifically their skin colour, and diminish other areas of their lives related to achieving success" (p. 25). To do so, the commercials feature lighter-skinned Indian female celebrities (e.g., Aishwarya Rai, winner of the 1994 Miss World pageant) who endorse skin-lightening products by publicizing them as scientifically "proven" and to guarantee "radiant, flawless, [and] perfect" skin (McLoughlin, 2017, p. 59).

Similar findings were noted in Karan's (2008) content analysis of *Fair and Lovely* commercials. The author found that the advertisements used lifestyle narratives and before-and-after visual techniques to preserve shadeism. South Asian women with darker skin tones were portrayed as "failing" to find prospective grooms and high-paying jobs in multinational companies; yet, once they used *Fair and Lovely*, they achieved "glowing" skin of a much lighter shade, and that appeared to solve these women's myriad problems (Karan, 2008; also see Mire, 2005, July 28). The ways pro-shadeism beauty and media portrayals are processed by, and "fit" within, the lived experiences of South Asian women, are explored in the next section.

South Asian Women's Experiences of Shadeism

In a survey (N = 1992) assessing the frequency of skin-lightening practices amongst men and women in Mumbai, India, Shroff and colleagues (2018) discovered that more than half (59.6%; n = 1238) of the women who participated in their study had used fairness products in their lifetime, with 74.6% using the products daily, and 43.8% using them in the last 30 days (Shroff et al., 2018). Researchers have highlighted the psychological outcomes of shadeism for South Asian women living in India (Harper & Choma, 2019; Prusaczyk & Choma, 2018). For example, Harper and Choma (2019) discovered that Indian women who internalized white beauty ideals scrutinized their skin tone and engaged in skin-bleaching practices that they considered "aesthetic." Participants who surveille their skin tone were dissatisfied with, and bleached, their faces. Although participants emphasized the physical outcomes of using skin bleaching products, they believed that the products had "positive" effects on physical appearance (Harper & Choma, 2019). Similar to Harpers and Choma (2019), Prusaczyk and Choma (2018) found that skin tone surveillance was associated with greater depressive symptoms and diminished life satisfaction amongst women in India aging19 to 30 years old.

Empirical studies have been conducted to better understand South Asian women's experiences of shadeism in India, within interpersonal and institutional contexts. In their qualitative study, Sims and Hirudayaraj (2016) found that media (e.g., television programs) shaped South Asian Indian women's perceptions of beauty, and triggered self-consciousness about their appearance. In childhood, participants reported being aware of the significance of physical appearance, when their family members, family friends, classmates, and teachers used positive or derogatory terms toward fairer- and darker-skinned peers, respectively, and encouraged these women, as children, to protect their skin from the sun and use skin-lightening

products. Because of their darker skin tones, many participants perceived themselves to be further limited in terms of career opportunities that require interactions or exposure to others (e.g., a darker-skinned actress was not selected for leading roles, and often told by her directors to use skin-lighteners; Sims & Hirudayaraj, 2016).

In the context of heterosexual marriage, South Asian women view lighter skin tone synonymously with *colour capital*, a social privilege that improves their social status and possibility of marrying wealthy and upper-social-class men (Bakhshi & Baker, 2011; Ramasubramanian & Jain, 2009; Utley Jr. & Darity Jr., 2016). Several studies have been conducted to investigate South Asian women's experiences of shadeism within traditionally arranged marriages (e.g., Chattopadhyay & Chattopadhyay, 2019; Dhillon-Jamerson, 2019; Jha & Adelman, 2009; Nagar, 2018), a customary practice in South Asia that deems families responsible to search for potential grooms or brides for their children of marriageable age (Dholakia, 2015). For example, in a content analysis of newspaper matrimonial advertisements, Utley Jr. and Darity Jr. (2016) discovered that the brides' advertisements did not include content from a single prospective bride that had darker skin, and did not indicate any preference for the complexion of the grooms. Results indicated that, approximately 40% of the advertisements reported the complexions of prospective brides as "very fair," "fair," "wheatish," and "rosy." The grooms' advertisements did not comment on the men's complexions. Though less than 20% of prospective grooms' advertisements indicated the preference for the bride's skin colour, none mentioned desiring a darker-skinned bride. These findings imply colour capital as more foundational for women than men, and influential in terms of a woman's "marriageability" (Utley Jr. & Darity Jr., 2016).

The aforementioned studies emphasize that South Asian women in India experience shadeism in their relationships with family, friends, and relatives, and in certain spheres and institutional contexts such as career opportunities and marriage, respectively, which adversely affect their psychological wellbeing (e.g., Harper & Choma, 2019; Sims & Hirudayaraj, 2016; Utley Jr. & Darity Jr., 2016). Of importance is assessing the ways lighter skin tone ideals impact women in South Asian Canadian diasporas.

How Shadeism Affects South Asian Canadian Diasporas

Anand (2009) defines *diaspora* as a collective of people: 1) residing away from their homeland in a new country; and 2) who are self-aware of cultural and ethnic traits that collectively separate them from their host culture and connect them to the place they come from. Thus, a diaspora is a subject position that underscores culture as a contested space, wherein diasporic persons negotiate the cultural values of their own ethnicity as well as that of the host country (Anand, 2009). South Asian women in Canada embrace a diasporic position, as they negotiate South Asian and Canadian cultural values.

The concept of diaspora is useful to understand the transnational phenomena of migration, which originates from colonial and imperialist histories, and comprises modern life and social relations that cross, transcend, and transform social boundaries (Anand, 2009; Das Gupta et al., 2007; Levitt, 2011; Tölöyan, 2007). Shadeism in South Asian Canadian diasporas is also an issue of *transnational feminism,* which describes how colonial ideals of whiteness and the consequent global and capitalist skin-lightening industry affect women within the diasporas (Nadkarni, 2017). Diasporas intersect with transnational feminism to build the framework *diasporic transnational feminism*, which can be used to advance understanding of how South Asian Canadian women negotiate their ethnic and Canadian cultural values, while they are

simultaneously affected by the globalization of lighter skin privilege, and the capitalist nature of the skin-lightening industry (Campt & Thomas, 2008).

Along with diasporic transnational feminism, Levitt's (2011) *transnational model of gender and migration* may explain how South Asian women in Canada construct and negotiate their gender across sites and levels of transnational fields of social experiences in South Asian and South Asian Canadian settings. Transnational models of gender and migration highlight two concepts referred to as *social remittances* and *global values packages*. South Asian women bring in and receive *social remittances* (e.g., norms, practices, ideas, values, and social capital), such as shadeist norms and practices (e.g., lighter skin tones as a social capital and skin-lightening behaviours) from their homelands, which, in turn, uniquely affect their settlement in Canada. Negative social messages related to their skin tones continue to persist in both South Asian and South Asian Canadian communities, which ultimately influence South Asian women's gender performance within these cultural spaces.

South Asian women living in Canada also encounter *global values packages*, or the global circulation of privileging lighter complexions and skin-lightening practices, which affects their process of vernacularization. Vernacularization is defined as novel ideas about national identity and belonging, and alternative possibilities of local and global forces shaping ideas of subjectivity, authority, and autonomy (Levitt, 2011). Hence, local and global messages about the value of various skin tones shape South Asian women's subjectivity, authority, autonomy, and sense of identity and belonging in Canada.

South Asian Canadian Women's Experiences of Shadeism

To the author's knowledge, there are only two studies that have explored South Asian women's experiences and outcomes of shadeism in Canada (e.g., Dhillon, 2016; Sahay & Piran,

1997). Dhillon (2016) conducted interviews with 10 South Asian Canadian women living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and found that participants perceived lighter skin for South Asian women living in Canada to: represent beauty and femininity; reflect a crucial status symbol; and depict an asset that should be "protected," because it is a form of social, cultural, and economic capital (i.e., resources that can be accessed through one's social, cultural, and economic network). The participants internalized white beauty ideals because of 1) their families (primarily, mothers and grandmothers), peers, and media portrayals; and 2) their intentions to secure (predominantly heterosexual) dating and marital prospects. Participants felt burdened by the need to maintain lighter complexions to preserve their family's honour within diasporic communities. Still, they desired to boost their social capital by marrying a well-settled suitor (Dhillon, 2016). Dhillon (2016) documented familial and diasporic experiences of shadeism for South Asian women in Canada, within a city centre outside of Toronto and, with the exception of white beauty ideals, did not explore consequences of shadeism in-depth. It is quite possible that attitudes surrounding shadeism may vary when conducted in other geographic regions within Canada, and it could be argued that a comprehensive, contemporary examination of issues associated with shadeism is a worthy empirical undertaking.

The second study was conducted much earlier by Sahay and Piran (1997).[4] These researchers investigated women's evaluation of their skin tone, and the impact this had for their body satisfaction. Again, this study was conducted amongst South Asian Canadian women (N = 100) living in Toronto. Results indicated that darker-skinned South Asian Canadian women expressed the greatest desire to achieve a complexion that was lighter in tone followed by their medium- and lighter-skinned female counterparts. The medium-skinned, rather than darker-skinned South Asian Canadian women, reported the least body satisfaction, however. Arguably,

darker-skinned women were aware that they could do less about conforming to white beauty ideals, whereas medium-skinned women may feel that lighter skin was attainable. As expected, lighter-skinned South Asian Canadian women reported the highest degree of body satisfaction (Sahay & Piran, 1997). Importantly, findings of this study are valuable for assessing body image satisfaction and its relationship with women's evaluation of their skin tone. However, as the study was conducted 24 years ago, it is crucial to understand whether South Asian women in Canada perceive their skin tones differently at present. Exploring the correlations between skin tone perception and additional psychological health (e.g., general mental health) and appearance-related (e.g., salience of, and attitudes toward, own physical appearance) variables also would advance an in-depth understanding of shadeism amongst South Asian women in Canada.

In summary, South Asian Canadian women with darker complexions witness and experience pressure from their families and diasporic communities to attain lighter skin, and are encouraged to do so in order to maintain familial honour and gain marital opportunities. Exposure to lighter skin tone privilege interpersonally and through media representations led South Asian women in Canada to internalize white beauty ideals and desire lighter skin tones (Dhillon, 2016; Sahay & Piran, 1997).

Incremental Advances

In the present study, two key limitations of the existing literature are addressed. First, there is a paucity of research on shadeism in a Canadian context, with the exceptions of Dhillon (2016) and Sahay and Piran (1997). Both of these studies, however, were conducted in Toronto, a large, metropolitan Canadian city, with racially and ethnically diverse social groups. It is possible that South Asian women in smaller Canadian cities (e.g., Saskatoon) experience shadeism as well, and even more severely than those residing in larger Canadian cities such as Toronto, as

South Asian communities in smaller cities may share a close-knit relationship. Hence, the current study expands the literature to South Asian Canadian diasporas across multiple geographical landscapes.

Second, Dhillon (2016) and Sahay and Piran (1997) revealed that South Asian Canadian women experienced shadeism within interpersonal relationships (e.g., family, peers, and ethnic communities) and social contexts (e.g., media representations), which led them to internalize white beauty ideals and fostered the desire to have lighter complexions. However, as Sahay and Piran's (1997) study is outdated, there is a need to explore the contemporary impact of shadeism on intrapersonal factors, such as body image and appearance-related attitudes; coping, resilience, and resistance techniques; skin-lightening behaviours, and mental health amongst South Asian women in a Canadian context. Further, considering that South Asian women in Canada adopt a diasporic viewpoint and negotiate their own and Canadian cultural ideologies pertinent to their skin tones, it is necessary to recognize the influence of cultural identification in their experiences of shadeism (Anand, 2009; Levitt, 2011).

Research Design

From October 2020 to March 2021, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was conducted that included quantitative methods, and then, qualitative data collection and analysis to enhance understanding of the initial quantitative results (Babbie et al., 2021). In this study, Phase I was an online survey conducted from October 2020 to January 2021. The survey highlighted intrapersonal processes of shadeism, specifically examining the associations between shadeism, body image and appearance-related attitudes, and an integrated South Asian Canadian identity. Following Phase I, Phase II was conducted from January to March 2021, which included virtual semi-structured interviews. This qualitative phase explored South Asian

Canadian women's experiences of shadeism within their interpersonal relationships, and social, and cultural spaces. The Phase II interview questions were generated based on previous literature and the author's own experiences with shadeism. The findings from Phase II helped contextualize the results from Phase I. There was no sizable delay between the Phase I and Phase II data collection periods. A mixed-methods design helped to achieve *triangulation,* and thus allowed for "the benefits of using different methods, observers, or data sources to get multiple views of some phenomenon" (Babbie et al., 2021, p. 25). Objectification theory, diasporic transnational feminism, and the transnational model of gender and migration, as discussed in the literature review, guided the framework for this study.

Prior to delineating Phase I of the study, it is crucial to describe the researcher's *positionality*, defined as "the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study—the community, the organization or the participant group" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). In the present thesis, the researcher's positionality is uniquely relevant to both the quantitative (Phase I) and qualitative (Phase II) portions of the research undertaken. For instance, the design of the study (e.g., the selection of particular psychometric measures in Phase I and their subsequent use in hypothesis-testing, as well as the determination of the broader study goals and interview questions for Phase II) were guided by the researcher's positionality. Additionally, the researcher's positionality undoubtedly impacted the interpretations of interview findings in Phase II.

Positionality

I am a darker-skinned, South Asian Canadian academic woman living in Saskatchewan with my family comprised of my parents and my husband. In 2010, I immigrated to Canada from Bangladesh. As a 27-year-old adult, middle class, cisgender, and heterosexual woman, I am

aware of my privileges related to my age, social class, gender identity, and sexual orientation. However, I am a darker-skinned "visible minority" woman in Canada. Hence, I experience racism in white-dominant Canadi an spaces (e.g., being questioned where I am "originally" from). I also experience shadeism within my ethnic community for not being lighter-skinned (e.g., recommendations to use skin-lightening products in South Asian beauty salons). I began challenging shadeist and racist narratives within South Asian and Canadian cultural spaces when I discovered my passion in building a career as a feminist academic woman. Through my research, I began advocating for equity toward, and wellbeing of, racialized women, including those with South Asian ethnic backgrounds.

Phase I (Quantitative): Online Survey

Hypotheses

On the basis of the literature reviewed, three hypotheses were tested:

1) South Asian Canadian women's evaluation of their skin complexion as darker will correlate with adverse psychological health, as examined by scores on a measure of mental health;
2) Tendencies of appearance fixing, conscious awareness and negative perceptions about appearance, self-objectification, and skin-lightening behaviours will moderate the association between South Asian Canadian women's darker skin tone evaluation and compromised psychological wellbeing.
3) Rationally accepting one's body image and embodying an integrated South Asian Canadian bicultural identity will reduce the magnitude of the relationship between South Asian Canadian women's darker skin tone appraisal and negative psychological wellbeing.

Methodology

Participants

To recruit participants in Phase I (online survey), the survey link was posted on the University of Saskatchewan PAWS Bulletin, the supervisor's research laboratory social media pages (i.e., Facebook and Twitter), the author's own social media accounts, and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online labour market that allows researchers to hire 'workers' to complete tasks based on their demographics or qualifications (Kiss et al., 2019). The author contacted relevant organizations (e.g., the International Women of Saskatoon and Canadian Women's Foundation) and social media pages (e.g., Bangladeshi Community Association of Saskatoon) to inquire about their interest in assisting with participant recruitment.

Overall, 877 respondents (i.e., 268 from PAWS Bulletin and the social media accounts of the lab and the author; and 609 from MTurk) were recruited to participate in the online survey, as recorded by SurveyMonkey where the online survey was conducted. Of 877 recruited individuals, 571 did not provide informed consent to participate in the survey, and their data were discarded. Of 306 who provided informed consent, 137 did not meet the inclusion criteria (i.e., 55 came from ethnicities other than South Asian, 78 did not reside in Canada, and four reported themselves as cisgender men). The final sample consisted of 169 participants (i.e., 165 cisgender women, one trans woman, two gender nonbinary persons, and one individual who did not provide a response to the gender identity question), of which, 158 were from PAWS and social media accounts of the lab and the author, and 11 were MTurk responders.

Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 64, with the mean age being 27.44 years old (SD = 9.654). The number of years participants have lived in Canada ranged from one to 60 (M = 16.71, SD = 11.25), and 0 to 60 (M = 10.48, SD = 10.64) in their home countries. A majority of

participants did not lighten their skin in the past 30 days or six months (86-89%), were heterosexual/straight (81%), born in countries other than Canada (71%), currently living in Saskatchewan (54%), and reported being "single" (66%), when asked about their relationship status. With respect to their nationality and education, 45% were from India, and 39% had an undergraduate degree. Table 1 provides a sociodemographic profile of survey participants whose data were analyzed.

Measures

A series of measures were included in the survey that examined skin tone evaluation, skin-lightening practices, mental health, body image attitudes, appearance-related attitudes, and bicultural identity integration.

Bicultural Identity Integration (BII-Version 2; Huynh, Benet-Martinez, & Nguyen, 2018). The BII is a 17-item measure that examines the perceived harmony (i.e., lack of conflict) and blending (i.e., lack of compartmentalization) between two unique cultures for bicultural individuals. To suit the current study, the items were modified to investigate the bicultural identity integration for South Asian women in Canada.

The BII consists of two subscales: 1) *cultural harmony vs. conflict* (10 items; e.g., "I feel like someone moving between the South Asian and Canadian cultures"); and 2) *cultural blendedness vs. compartmentalization* (7 items; e.g., "I feel South Asian Canadian"). The BII uses a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*), with total scores ranging from 17 to 119 (subscale scores = 10 to 70 for harmony vs. conflict, and 7 to 49 for blendedness vs. compartmentalization). Eight items were reverse-coded to ensure that higher scores indicate greater harmony and blendedness between South Asian and Canadian cultures. Huynh and

colleagues (2018) found that the BII subscales demonstrated good scale score and test-retest reliability, as well as convergent and divergent validity.

Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory (BICSI; Cash, Santos, & Williams, 2005). The BICSI is a 29-item measure that examines how individuals usually manage threats or challenges to body-image related experiences. It consists of three subscales: 1) *appearance fixing,* which refers to altering one's physical appearance by covering, obscuring, or correcting the perceived defect (10 items; e.g., "I do something to try to look more attractive"); 2) *positive rational acceptance,* which refers to approaches emphasizing acceptance of body image challenges, as well as positive self-care or rational self-talk about one's appearance (11 items; e.g., "I remind myself of my good qualities"); and 3) *avoidance,* which refers to the attempt to escape or deter worrying body-image circumstances (8 items; e.g., "I try to ignore the situation and my feelings"). For this study, only the appearance fixing and positive rational acceptance subscales were included. As well, participants responded to an open-ended question prior to responding to the scale items that asked them to describe a situation that has negatively affected their perception of their skin complexion. The appearance fixing and positive rational acceptance subscales employ a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *Definitely not like me*; 4 = *Definitely like me*). Possible scores for these subscales range from 10 to 40, and 11 to 44, respectively. Higher scores reflect greater use of strategies such as appearance fixing and positive rational acceptance to cope with the difficult situations concerning body image. Cash and colleagues (2005) reported that the appearance fixing and positive rational acceptance subscales are psychometrically sound.

Centre for Appearance Research Salience Scale (CARSAL; Moss & Rosser, 2012). The CARSAL is a 5-item measure (e.g., "For me, my appearance is an important part of who I am") that examines the extent to which individuals' appearance and physical self are brought into

conscious awareness. The CARSAL uses a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*), with total scores ranging from 5 to 35, and greater scores signifying greater salience of one's physical appearance to their self-concept. The CARSAL demonstrates satisfactory test-retest reliability scores as well as convergent and discriminant validity (Moss & Rosser, 2012).

Centre for Appearance Research Valence Scale (CARVAL; Moss & Rosser, 2012). The CARVAL is an 8-item measure (e.g., "I am satisfied with my physical appearance") that examines the degree to which participants evaluate their appearance in a positive or negative way. The CARVAL employs a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*), with total scores ranging from 8 to 56. Five items were reverse-coded, with greater scores suggesting negative appraisal of one's physical appearance. The CARVAL has shown excellent test-retest reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity (Moss & Rosser, 2012).

Frequency of Skin-Lightening (FSL; Shroff et al., 2018). Participants responded to three single-item measures, asking them if they lightened their skin at present, and how frequently they did so within the last 30 days as well as the last six months. Examples of the items include: "Do you lighten your skin at present?"; "How many times in the past 30 days have you lightened your skin?"; and "How many times in the past 6 months have you lightened your skin?" Participants answered the first question with a "Yes" or "No." They responded to the frequency items (i.e., the "30 days" and "6 months" questions) using a 5-point scale [1 = *1-2 times a week*; 5 = *I have not lightened my skin in the past 30 days (or 6 months)*]. Participants' responses to all three questions were reverse-coded, so that the highest scores demonstrated greater likelihood of engaging in skin-lightening practices.

Mental Health Inventory (MHI; Short-Form; Veit & Ware, 1983). The MHI is an 18-item measure that examines individuals' overall emotional functioning, and was developed as part of a larger psychometric measure, the *Multiple Sclerosis Quality of Life Inventory*. It consists of four subscales: anxiety (5 items; e.g., "Have you been anxious or worried?"), depression (5 items; e.g., "Do you feel depressed?"), behavioural and emotional control (4 items; e.g., "Have you been in firm control of your behaviour, thoughts, emotions, and feelings?") and positive affect (4 items; e.g., "Have you felt calm and peaceful?"). The MHI employs a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *None of the time*; 6 = *All of the time*), with total scores varying from 18 to 108 (subscale scores = 5 to 30 for anxiety and depression; 4 to 24 for behavioural and emotional control, as well as positive affect). For this study, eight items were reverse-coded to ensure that higher scores reflected negative mental health. The MHI-Short-Form has shown excellent scale score reliability and validity (Ritvo et al., 1997; Veit & Ware, 1983).

Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviours Scale (SOBBS; Lindner & Tantleff-Dunn, 2017). The SOBBS is a 14-item measure that assesses women's self-objectification tendencies as a result of their body image. It consists of two factors, each containing 7 items: 1) the internalization of the observer's perspective on the body (e.g., "I try to imagine what my body looks like to others"); and 2) perception of the body representing the self, including emphasizing the appearance of the body rather than its function or the thoughts and feelings of a person (e.g., "Looking attractive to others is more important to me than being happy with who I am inside"). The SOBBS uses a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*), with total scores ranging from 14 to 98, and higher scores denoting increased levels of self-objectification. Lindner and Tantleff-Dunn (2017) reported that the overall scale and both the factors are psychometrically robust.

Single-item Skin Colour Rating. A single-item question assessed participants' ratings of their current skin complexion: "Using the slider, please indicate your current skin complexion on the colour palette." The question was followed by a skin colour palette image that ranges from lighter to darker in skin tone. The gradations in the image were provided to assist participants to imagine where they might fall on the spectrum of skin tones provided. Participants used the slider to indicate the skin shade they viewed as best aligning with their current skin complexion, and the skin tone assessment measure ranged from 0 to 100.

Demographics. Prior to the commencement of the online survey, participants responded to the screening (i.e., inclusion criterion) questions asking whether they were from a South Asian ethnicity. If they did, they would be asked to mention their nationality (e.g., Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan), and if not, they would be directed to the debriefing form. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to report the following: age, gender identity, sexual orientation, highest level of education, annual household income, relationship status, place of birth, residence in Canada (including the province they live in), and number of years lived in Canada and home country. It should be noted that, although this study focused on the experiences of South Asian women in Canada, demographic questions about gender identity and residence in Canada were not posed as screening questions.

Procedure

The online survey was conducted on SurveyMonkey™ in the Fall of 2020, and consisted of 103 questions. The survey itself took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. After providing their informed consent, participants indicated their ethnicity. Those with South Asian ethnic communities were eligible for the survey. Thus, they responded to seven psychometric measures that examined their perceptions of skin tone (i.e., the single-item skin colour rating

slider), skin-lightening behaviours (i.e., frequency of skin-lightening practices), body image and appearance-related attitudes and behaviours (i.e., body image coping – appearance fixing and positive rational acceptance, appearance salience and valence, and self-objectification), psychological wellbeing (i.e., mental health inventory), and their perspective on their South Asian Canadian cultural identity (i.e., bicultural identity integration). At the end of survey, participants were invited to comment on the survey, should they choose to do so.

Results

All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 27. Bivariate correlational analyses were conducted between key variables (e.g., skin tone evaluation and body image coping) to test the first hypothesis and explore additional associations. Moderation analyses were conducted via Hayes' PROCESS Macro v3.5 to test the second and third hypotheses.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics computed for all variables, as well as Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all measures wherein there was the computation of total scores. All scale score reliability coefficients were excellent (i.e., Cronbach's alpha values exceeded .85). Mean total scores for the measures of skin colour rating, negative perceptions of appearance, self-objectification, and adverse mental health were below their respective scale midpoints. These values suggest that, on average, participants evaluated their complexions in the "medium" colour range, positively perceived their appearance and mental health, and did not engage in pronounced self-objectification. The mean total score for the appearance fixing scale hovered around the midpoint, suggesting that participants fixed their outer appearance to cope with body image issues to a relative degree. Similarly, mean total scores for the measures of positive rational acceptance, salience of appearance, and bicultural identity integration were above their respective scale midpoints. Thus, on average, participants were relatively positive

and rational about accepting their body image-related experiences, and evinced greater consciousness and awareness of their appearance and physical self, along with integration into both South Asian and Canadian cultures.

Table 3 presents the correlational analyses for all key variables. Participants' skin tone evaluation correlated positively with their scores on negative perceptions of appearance; thus, those who rated their skin tone as darker negatively perceived their outer appearance. Specifically, participants' frequency of skin-lightening practices in the last 30 days or 6 months were positively associated with their scores on appearance fixing and self-objectification, and negatively associated with blendedness of their South Asian and Canadian cultural ideologies. Hence, participants who lightened their skin evidenced tendencies to "fix" their appearance, engage in self-objectification, and compartmentalize their South Asian and Canadian cultural ideologies. As well, participants' negative mental health scores correlated with higher appearance fixing and self-objectification tendencies, negative perceptions of their outer appearance, and lower levels of harmonization of their South Asian and Canadian identities. Therefore, participants with adverse mental health engaged in appearance fixing and self-objectification, negatively perceived their appearance, and had conflicted perspectives about their South Asian and Canadian identities. Also, participants' scores on appearance fixing were positively associated with their scores on self-objectification, as well as consciousness, awareness, and negative perceptions of their appearance, and negatively associated with harmonization of their South Asian and Canadian identities. Hence, participants who engaged in appearance fixing evidenced greater involvement in self-objectification; consciousness, awareness, and negative perceptions of their appearance; and experienced conflicts between their South Asian and Canadian identities. Lastly, participants' scores on positive and rational

acceptance of their appearance correlated inversely with negative perceptions of appearance; therefore, participants who positively and rationally accepted their outer appearance were less likely to negatively perceive their appearance.

Hypothesis 1

Based on the bivariate correlations presented in Table 3, participants' skin colour evaluation scores positively correlated with their scores on mental health, meaning that participants who rated their skin tone as darker experienced greater negative mental health. However, this correlation was not statistically significant; and therefore, the first hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 2

Simple moderation analyses were conducted on Hayes' PROCESS v3.5. A series of models were created separately, with skin tone evaluation as an independent variable (IV), mental health as a dependent variable (DV), and the following variables as moderators (Ms): appearance-related conscious awareness, negative perceptions about appearance, appearance fixing, skin-lightening behaviours, and self-objectification.

The model with appearance-related conscious awareness as a moderator was not significant; F (3, 161) = 1.59, p = .19, R^2 = .0287. Specifically, skin tone evaluation (B = .3836, p = .21) and conscious awareness about one's appearance (B = .8351, p = .14) did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health. As well, conscious awareness about one's appearance did not significantly moderate the association between South Asian Canadian women's evaluation of their skin tone and their mental health scores; B = -.011, p = .31).

The model with negative perceptions of one's appearance as a moderator was significant; F (3, 161) = 21.83, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .2879$. Thus, 29% of the variance in the model was due to the two predictors: skin tone evaluation and negative perceptions of appearance. Specifically, skin tone evaluation did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores; $B = .0251$, $p = .8499$. However, women's negative perceptions of their appearance significantly predicted their mental health scores; $B = .7752$, $p < .01$, but did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; $B = -.0019$, $p = .64$.

The model with appearance fixing measure as a moderator was significant; F (3, 162) = 10.57, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .1638$. Thus, 16% of variance in this model was due to the two predictors: skin tone evaluation and appearance fixing as a body image coping strategy. Specifically, skin tone evaluation did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores; $B = .2044$, $p = .31$. However, appearance fixing as a coping strategy significantly predicted these women's mental health scores; $B = 1.0931$, $p < .01$, but did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; $B = -.0059$, $p = .43$.

The model with participants' tendency for skin-lightening as a moderator was not significant; F (3, 162) = 1.08, $p = .36$, $R^2 = .0196$. Specifically, skin tone evaluation ($B = .3823$, $p = .14$) and skin-lightening behaviours ($B = 17.13$, $p = .18$) did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores. Participants' engagement in skin-lightening practices did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; $B = -.2859$, $p = .21$.

The model with participants' skin-lightening behaviours in the past 30 days as a moderator was not significant: F (3, 161) = .7998, $p = .50$, $R^2 = .0147$. Specifically, skin tone evaluation did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores; B

= .3823, p = .14. Participants' skin-lightening behaviours in the past 30 days did not predict their mental health scores; B = 7.23, p = .34, and did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; B = -.1282, p = .36.

The model with participants' skin-lightening behaviours in the past six months as a moderator was not significant: F (3, 161) = .5520, p = .65, R^2 = .0102. Specifically, skin tone evaluation (B = .0380, p = .80) and skin-lightening behaviours in the past 6 months (B = -.8997, p = .89) did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores. Participants' skin-lightening behaviours in the past six months also did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; B = .0316, p = .79.

The model with participants' self-objectification tendencies as a moderator was statistically significant: F (3, 162) = 7.3937, p < .01, R^2 = .1204. Thus, 12% of variance in the model was due to the two predictors: skin tone evaluation and self-objectification tendencies. Specifically, skin tone evaluation (B = .0842, p = .68) and self-objectification tendencies (B = .3505, p = .07) did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores. Participants' self-objectification tendencies did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; B = -.0007, p = .85.

In summary, negative perceptions of appearance and appearance fixing tendencies predicted negative mental health amongst South Asian women in Canada who participated in this study. The model with self-objectification as a moderator and skin tone evaluation as an IV also was significant, indicating that participants' rating of their skin tones as darker and self-objectification tendencies *collectively* predicted their compromised mental health. However, no significant moderations were observed, and hypothesis two was not supported.

Hypothesis 3

Two models were created separately, with skin tone evaluation as an independent variable (IV), mental health as a dependent variable (DV), and the following variables as moderators (Ms): positive rational acceptance and bicultural identity integration.

The model with participants' positive rational acceptance as a moderator was not statistically significant: F (3, 161) = .6423, p = .59, R^2 = .0118. Specifically, skin tone evaluation did not significantly predict South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores; B = .2149, p = .44. Similarly, participants' positive rational acceptance did not significantly predict participants' mental health scores; B = .1421, p = .77, and did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; B = -.0048, p = .61.

The model with participants' bicultural identity integration as a moderator was statistically significant: F (3, 161) = 8.5922, p < .01, R^2 = .1380. Thus, 13.8% of variance in the model was due to the two predictors: skin tone evaluation and bicultural identity integration. However, neither skin tone evaluation (B = .0409, p = .90) nor bicultural identity integration (B = -.3857, p = .08) significantly predicted South Asian Canadian women's mental health scores. Participants' integration of bicultural identity also did not moderate the association between their skin tone evaluation and mental health scores; B = .0004, p = .10.

Overall, the model with bicultural identity integration as a moderator and skin tone rating as an IV was significant. Hence, South Asian Canadian women's evaluation of their skin tone as darker and lower levels of integration of South Asian and Canadian identities *collectively* predicted their adverse mental health. Yet, hypothesis three was not supported, as no significant moderations of positive rational acceptance and bicultural identity integration were found.

Discussion

Phase I of the present thesis was designed to examine the associations between darker skin tone evaluation and adverse psychological health amongst South Asian women in Canada. Phase I also explored body image (e.g., self-objectification), appearance-related (e.g., consciousness and negative perceptions), and cultural factors (i.e., bicultural identity integration) as moderators in the aforementioned correlation. The hypotheses were not supported, as no significant correlations were observed between participants' darker skin tone appraisal and negative mental health, with no moderation effects of body image, appearance, and cultural factors. Participants who appraised their skin tone as darker were more likely to perceive their physical appearance negatively, and those who lightened their skin tone were more likely to engage in self-objectification and appearance fixing. The statistical significance of the regression models wherein skin tone evaluation was an IV, self-objectification and bicultural identity integration were moderators, respectively, and mental health was a DV implied that South Asian women's perceptions of their skin tone as darker predicted more pronounced adverse mental health only when they engaged in self-objectification and did not integrate their South Asian and Canadian cultural identities.

Associations between skin tone and body image constructs demonstrated skin tone as a salient indicator of body image. Brady and colleagues (2017) found that most body image models have examined white women's experiences, and viewed "whiteness" as the norm when comparing body image experiences between women from multiple racial groups (e.g., white women vs. African or Latin American women). Thus, there is room for scholars to develop body image frameworks that are more inclusive of racial and ethnic body-related experiences (e.g., shadeism). Racially- and ethnically-sensitive body image models encourage South Asian women

in Canada to seek relevant assistance if they experience concerns related to their body image or complexions within their ethnic communities.

With regards to the role of culture in shadeism, Phase I revealed that participants who lightened their skin tones did not integrate their South Asian and Canadian identities, struggling to navigate through South Asian and Canadian ideologies of skin colour that promote skin-lightening and tanning practices, respectively (see Cafri et al., 2006 to learn about skin-tanning practices in Western societies). This finding suggests that integration of South Asian *and* Canadian identities buffers against involvement in skin-lightening practices for South Asian women living in Canada. Findings similar to this were noted by American researchers (e.g., Goel, 2019). Goel (2019) conducted focus groups with South Asian American women, and found that participants negotiated with white beauty ideals by identifying more with the white, American culture in public spaces, where skin-tanning practices were widespread, and reverting to more traditional South Asian ideals of beauty within their ethnic community spaces. Thus, darker-skinned South Asian women in the United States confront shadeism when they self-identified as "less South Asian" and "more American" (Goel, 2019). It is imperative to conduct further studies to analyze more exhaustively the positive influence of cultural identity on experiences of shadeism in "multicultural" Canada.

Limitations and Future Directions

Three limitations in Phase I warrant attention. First, the present study examined shadeism amongst South Asian women in Canada. Yet, four men responded to the survey, which may be because the eligibility question only focused on ethnicity, rather than gender identity. Although men's participation suggests the possible impact of shadeism on their perspectives and experiences, future studies that adopt survey methodology and focus on shadeism could be more

thorough in their recruitment process. Researchers are recommended to determine eligibility or inclusion criteria based on the demographics of their targeted population.

Second, this study was a general overview of shadeism amongst South Asian women in Canada. Due to this limited scope, data from a number of demographic questions (e.g., age, sexual orientation, education, annual income, and relationship status) were not used in the present data analysis. These data, however, could be used in the author's subsequent analysis using this data. Future researchers also could utilize demographic data to offer rich details about individual variations in experiences and outcomes of shadeism within South Asian communities.

Third, the MHI measure was selected to investigate psychological wellbeing amongst South Asian women in Canada. Originally, this scale was developed to examine quality of life experienced by individuals with multiple sclerosis (i.e., a potentially disabling disease of the brain and spinal cord). However, the MHI was chosen for two reasons: 1) it consisted of scale items that were easily worded, reducing language barriers for South Asian Canadian women whose native language was not English; and 2) there is an absence of psychometric scale that explores South Asian women's general mental health within diasporic (e.g., Canadian) circumstances. To address this limitation, future studies could construct psychometrically sound measures that use cultural lens to investigate general mental health amongst South Asian diasporic women.

Additionally, the single-item measure to examine participants' evaluation of their skin tones was limited because the skin colour palette image above the measure did not adequately reflect darker skin tones, as indicated by some survey participants in the comments' section. This could be why participants' skin tone rating did not correlate with their mental health scores, and no moderations of body image and appearance-related factors were evidenced in this correlation.

Therefore, it is recommended that researchers include questions about circumstances that influence South Asian Canadian women's perceptions of their skin tones or tendencies to lighten their skin. Researchers could examine the women's skin tone perceptions and skin-lightening behaviours in distinct contexts, such as home, workplace, and Canadian South Asian diasporic communities or mainstream society. Although no scale was created to examine South Asian women's views of their skin tones, researchers have assessed how Africans and Latin/as evaluated their complexions (e.g., Assari & Caldwell, 2017; Monk, 2019; Uzogara, 2019). For example, in a secondary analysis on the correlation between skin colour and the possibility of incarceration amongst African Americans, Monk (2019) incorporated a single-item measure with 7-point Likert response options (1 = "Very Light Skin" to 7 = "Very Dark Skin"). Similar to Monk (2019), Uzogara (2019), who quantitatively examined within-group differences across Latinas of varying skin tones in perceived unfair treatment and preferences for housing segregation, adopted a single-item skin tone measure with 5-point Likert response format (1 = "Very Dark" to 5 = "Very Light"). They also made the single-item measure more specific by urging participants to evaluate their skin colour in comparison to members of their racial or ethnic group (Uzogara, 2019). Hence, future studies that explore South Asian Canadian women's perceptions of their skin tones could use single-item measures with categorical (Likert) response options or offering further context (e.g., comparison with other lighter- or darker-skinned South Asian women) to probe participants' responses. Future studies could also explore the correlations between South Asian Canadian women's evaluations of skin tones and psychological (e.g., self-esteem, hope, and resilience), developmental (e.g., age and level of maturity), body image (e.g., social comparison), and cultural (e.g., frequency and quality of community involvement and interactions) factors.

Phase II (Qualitative): Semi-Structured Interviews

Research Questions

Phase II consisted of semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of participants from Phase I. Three general areas of questioning were posed to participants, which were: 1) experiences of shadeism in interpersonal (family, relatives, friends, and romantic partners), social (e.g., schools and workplaces), and cultural spaces (e.g., South Asian home countries and Canadian diasporas, as well as broader Canadian society); 2) awareness of media privileging lighter skin and marketing of skin-lightening products; and, 3) implications of shadeism on psychological wellbeing and identity.

Participants

Participants who completed the Phase I survey were directed to a separate webpage, where they could indicate their interest in participating in a follow-up study. Eighty-two participants expressed interest, provided their contact information, and were subsequently invited via email to participate in Phase II. Of 82 participants, 29 responded to the invitation email. Finally, 13 South Asian women living in Canada participated in the interviews, as they provided informed consent, along with their availabilities to schedule the interview. Table 4 presents interview participants' demographics.

Interview Guide

The questions in the interview guide were developed based on the goals of the study, the author's positionality related to shadeist experiences, and the previous literature on social messages about darker complexions and South Asian women's experiences of shadeism. The interview questions explored South Asian Canadian women's individual perspectives on the social or cultural messages they receive about their skin tone; their experiences with shadeism in

interpersonal relationships, social, and cultural contexts; whether they were impacted by media representations of skin-lightening; and finally, any implications of shadeism for their psychological wellbeing and identity that they wished to express. Sample questions included: "Have you ever felt pressured by your family to use skin fairness products?" and "Have you ever felt targeted in school/university/work/public places because of your skin complexion?" Participants were asked additional questions that were necessary to further probe their experiences.

Procedure

At the end of Phase I, 82 survey participants wished to participate in a follow-up study, and thus, were sent an invitation letter by email. Twenty-nine individuals responded to the invitation email. As per recommendations in the field (Eysenbach & Till, 2001; Jowett et al., 2011), these 29 individuals were sent an informed consent sheet to read and interview questions with which to become familiar, prior to scheduling interviews. If, upon reviewing the consent form, as well as the interview questions, these individuals decided to participate, they were asked to sign the consent sheet and submit it to the researcher. Given the online nature of the study, which may be unfamiliar to those who decided to participate, providing questions ahead of time is recommended. The provision of questions ahead of time also was done as a means of providing any extra assistance participants may need, if they were uncomfortable with their ability to speak the English language. Participants were then asked to indicate their availability for the interview, once their informed consent and permission to conduct the interview on WebEx, the University of Saskatchewan's video conferencing platform, were obtained. Time zone differences with interviewees were considered, and a mutually convenient date and time for the interview was established.

At the time of interview, participants were orally asked again to give their informed consent to participate in the study. Following receipt of permission from participants, all interviews were digitally recorded. Participants were informed that they could turn off their video cameras if they did not wish to be video-recorded. The virtual interviews lasted for approximately 20-30 minutes. After the completion of the interviews, participants were emailed a demographic form to complete electronically, and a debriefing form that outlined the study goals. To maintain participant anonymity, each participant was asked to provide a pseudonym for themselves in the demographics form that could then be used for data reporting.

An undergraduate research assistant was hired to assist with transcription, and asked to sign a form that ensured confidentiality of participants' data. The research assistant transcribed five interviews, and the author transcribed six. Following transcription of interviews, participants emailed their respective transcripts and a transcript release form, and were asked to sign and send the form within two weeks. Hence, they could review their transcripts and suggest to remove any information that they did not want to be included in the research report. Participants also were informed that their permission to use the transcript in its current form would be presumed if a signed release form was not received by the given date. Five interviewees emailed the author a signed transcript release form, whose recommended changes were made.

Methodological Approach and Data Analysis

Inductive reflexive thematic analysis served as the Phase II methodological framework. Braun and Clarke (2019) define *reflexive thematic analysis* as a method to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data sets, and organize and describe them in rich details, while centering researcher subjectivity and reflexivity within each phase of the analysis (Braun &

Clarke, 2006, 2020). Given the newness of this study in a Canadian context, an inductive approach was adopted.

Following the transcription of interviews, the transcripts were imported to NVivo Version 12. According to Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) guidelines of the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis, I familiarized myself with the transcripts, re-read them, and generated initial codes based on participants' accounts of their experiences of shadeism in interpersonal, social, and cultural spaces (e.g., the code "interpersonal shadeism" was derived from participants' narrations of experiencing shadeism enacted by family members, external relatives [e.g., uncles, aunts, and cousins], friends, and romantic partners). Afterwards, I combined initial codes ("child nodes") to search for potential themes ("top-level nodes"). Next, I generated a thematic "map" by ensuring that the themes aligned with the coded extracts and the entire dataset. The thematic map comprised of four broader themes: 1) colonial origins of shadeism; 2) experiences of shadeism (i.e., interpersonal, social, and cultural spaces, media portrayals, and intersections of shadeism with other forms of oppression [e.g., racism]); 3) protective factors against shadeism (e.g., coping, resilience, and resistance; older age and maturity; and interpersonal support); and 4) outcomes of shadeism on perceptions of skin tone, skin-lightening practices, and psychological wellbeing. Finally, I refined the specifics of each theme to clearly define and name the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).

Researcher's depth of engagement with the data and reflexive practice is crucial to the analytical framework of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Thus, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the interview process, where I reflected on similarities and differences in experiences and outcomes of shadeism that I had with participants. I also reflected on my positionality as an "insider" in relation to the subject of shadeism.

Results

Table 5 presents the over-arching and sub-themes derived from interview data analyses.

Colonial Origins of Shadeism

This theme refers to the impact of European colonial history on the emergence of shadeism in South Asian communities. Participants indicated that the colonial history of South Asia preserved ideologies of beauty that were shadeist. This was perceived as evident when individuals with lighter complexions were socially advantaged in contemporary South Asian communities. For instance, Anroop (43, Indian, born in Canada) indicated that greater proximity to White people since the history of European colonization perpetuated shadeism in South Asian Canadian spaces. She described: "Where your … cultural capital comes from if you … can 'pass' for white, or the closer you look to white." Anroop's response implied that South Asians internalized white beauty ideals, and defined the concept of beauty based on white privilege and supremacy because of their history of European colonization.

> Another participant, Sunu (27, Bangladeshi, came to Canada 2.5 years ago), stated:
>
> If you have two things with you and you always prefer the more beautiful one. So, what's the beauty? People … like … light things, white things. I mean, maybe they are born to choose the lighter things and … love the white thing that have different kinds of attraction. Maybe lighter skin tone or fairer skin tone idea comes from there. … There could be other ideas, other things too that … in our world, … white people are more civilized, so when they … came our country at past … maybe people loved them as the civilized people and respect them.

In the aforementioned excerpt, Sunu indicated that people are "born to" or intergenerationally taught to believe in white beauty ideals and the association between whiteness and civilization.

Indeed, participants described that white (colonial) beauty ideals were responsible for the stereotyping of individuals with darker complexion; and specifically, promulgated stereotypes of darker-skinned persons such as them being as poor, unclean, and labourers, and lighter-skinned individuals being perceived as noble, rich, and belonging to a higher class. Additionally, Anu H. (20, Indian-Sri Lankan, came to Canada 7 years ago) perceived that social advantages were afforded even to those individuals with mixed White racial backgrounds. This originated from a colonial history in which white colonizers used to have nonconsensual sexual relationships with racialized women.

Experiences of Shadeism

This theme focuses on: 1) South Asian Canadian women's experiences of shadeism in interpersonal, social, and cultural spaces, and in relation to media portrayals; and 2) the intersections of experiences of shadeism and additional forms of oppression (e.g., racism).

Interpersonal Relationships.

Family Members. Shadeism appeared to be intergenerationally transmitted, and participants experienced shadeism from their family members. Shadeism within their familial contexts manifested as parents' frequent recommendations to use skin-lightening products, viewpoints of lighter skin tones as beautiful, and pressure to avoid being outdoors in the sun to obtain a lighter skin tone. For instance, Maya (22, Pakistani, came to Canada 18 years ago) said:

> I think what, when I was little, … I wouldn't put on any sunscreen, and I used to go out a lot. So, my skin … was a bit more darker when I was younger. I think like, even my parents, they would mention like, Oh, like you should wash your face more … There's definitely that perception of like lighter skin is like the good sort of skin. Like it would get you further … or you would be seen as more valued, I think, more prettier.

Here, Maya narrated that her parents urged her to engage in behaviours (e.g., washing face) that enforced the social message that lighter skin is "good." Within familial contexts, participants were exposed to greater degrees of shadeism from older generations (e.g., grandparents), and maternal family members (e.g., mothers and grandmothers). For instance, Fatima (21, Pakistani, came to Canada 18 years ago), Bunty (22, Indian, came to Canada 17 years ago), and Appu (22, Indian, came to Canada a month ago) felt compelled by their mothers to use skin-lightening products, homemade masks, and lighter-shade makeups; although, Fatima mentioned that her mother did not mandate her to use skin-lightening products. Similarly, from her grandmothers, Jasmin (55, Indian-Pakistani, came to Canada 55 years ago) learned the importance of having a lighter skin tone to find a "good" husband.

Relatives. Participants experienced greater shadeism from their relatives (e.g., uncles, aunts, and cousins) than anyone else in their interpersonal relationships. Specifically, participants' relatives recommended them to use skin-lightening products and lighter-shade makeups, discriminated against them for being darker-skinned, and/or praised them for appearing lighter-skinned. For instance, Sunu shared: "Other relatives … often said that … you have a darker skin tone so … you will … face difficulty with your marriage. Nobody … will … like you. … Use some product to make your skin tone better." Here, she described how her relatives sympathized with her and other darker-skinned women because of their darker complexions.

Friends. A few participants experienced shadeism from their friends. For example, Bunty was indirectly exposed to shadeism from her friends at a family picnic:

> I went on this trip and … it was like a big family venture. And … I heard… my fellow friends who were saying …, "Oh, I don't want to be out in the sun too long. You know,

> I'll get dark at [these] meetings like that." And it was shocking because I haven't heard like those type of comments if someone say things like that in a long time, I know it was like a really a big deal. Like we are here to enjoy ourselves and you're worrying about getting darker.

In the aforementioned quote, Bunty described witnessing her friends' enacting microaggressive forms of shadeism in the form of avoiding the sun for fear of getting darker. She perceived experiencing shadeism, although this microaggessive act was not directed toward her. Concerning subtle shadeism perpetuated by peers, Sunu narrated that she was indirectly influenced by her friends into using skin-lightening products, as she heard them discussing the products' "benefits." Finally, Anroop expected experiencing shadeism if she had South Asian friends, as favouring lighter skin tones was widespread in South Asian contexts.

As a darker-skinned South Asian woman, I encounter subtle forms of shadeism within my interpersonal relationships, such as: 1) an overemphasis on maintaining a lighter complexion by using sunscreens and protecting the skin from the sun; 2) general perceptions of lighter-skinned women as beautiful; and 3) receiving comments that my inner beauty matters the most, implying that my darker complexion invalidates that my outer appearance is beautiful. Certain past instances in interpersonal contexts that were directly shadeist toward me included: 1) my uncle emphasizing my darker skin tone when looking for a prospective suitor for me; and 2) my mother-in-law initially rejecting me for being darker-skinned, and agreeing to have me as her daughter-in-law only after my husband convinced her.

Social and Cultural Spaces. Participants experienced shadeism in various social and cultural spaces, such as South Asian national, diasporic, and white dominant contexts. In South Asian communities, shadeist discourses were normalized, and lighter-skinned South Asian

women were appreciated, respected, received attention, and considered "prettier" and "marriageable." For instance, participants who perceived their complexions as lighter (e.g., Tina [22, Bangladeshi, came to Canada 19 years ago], Simran [19, Indian, came to Canada 17 years ago], and Manike [40, Sri Lankan, came to Canada 10 years ago]) received compliments from family and relatives in their home countries for being lighter-skinned and conforming to white beauty ideals. They garnered social acceptance and did not feel pressure related to their complexions; thus, they did not consider the use of skin-lightening products to be necessary. Fatima mentioned that her medium-to-lighter complexion led her to feel a sense of community with South Asians. However, Appu described how even lighter-skinned South Asian women felt pressure and were concerned about maintaining their lighter complexions because of the superior social status with which it was associated.

Participants with darker skin shades experienced shadeism; for instance, they were not considered marriageable. While living in their home countries and/or attending ethnic events (e.g., weddings), participants were recommended to avoid going outdoors and use skin-lightening products. Although they were complimented for having nice physical features, they constantly received negative comments about having darker complexions. Participants also experienced shadeism in various social settings (e.g., beauty salons, shopping malls, and neighbourhoods), as they received recommendations from beauticians and salespersons to learn about and use skin-lightening products. For example, Sunu narrated:

> I'm from a … South Asian country, Bangladesh. There are people … I mean, society, neighbours, they judge girls. … Especially, … I will not say that mostly, now things are being changed, but partially, they judge our girls by their skin tone ... So, I received a lot of messages from my surrounding, from my neighbours, from my classmates, from my

> society, from my culture. … In that culture, girls with the fair skin tone … the light skin tone is more appreciated than the darker skin tone. And also, beauty is just by the skin tone, that is the main thing.

In this anecdote, Sunu described the ways South Asian communities defined beauty based on skin tone, and "appreciated" lighter complexions more than darker ones. She also was stereotyped as belonging to a "poor" family when she visited shopping centres in her home country, even though she was raised in a higher middle-class family. She analyzed this experience based on the notion that equated lighter complexions with higher socioeconomic status. When asked about experiencing shadeism in schools, universities, and workplaces, Sunu explained that shadeism was normalized, specifically appraising girls and women based on their skin tone. She observed that her lighter-skinned female classmates received greater attention from heterosexual peers. Specifically, Sunu recalled an incident when her teachers did not select her as a spokesperson for a school event because of her darker complexion.

In Canada, participants continued to experience shadeism within South Asian contexts in the form of social exclusion, an absence of being placed in the limelight, and being called names (e.g., "Blackie"). For example, Anu H. shared her experience with her Pakistani friend's mother:

> Her mom was so adamant about making me use these skin-lightening products that it actually drew a wedge between our friendship and eventually we stopped being friends because it was—I found it a bit creepy how her mom was so serious about it. Every day, every morning, she would talk about it … I'm not going to find a good husband … I'm like, maybe fourteen, so I'm not looking for a husband ... So, it was very strange because she was very sweet to me and everything, very loving, obviously, but it was just everyday harping on the same thing that it was making me uncomfortable.

Anu H.'s anecdote evidenced her experiences of shadeism in Canada in the form of recommendations to use skin-lightening products and being stereotyped as someone who was unlikely to "find" a good husband.

Media Portrayals. The South Asian media valued lighter complexions for women by: 1) frequently marketing skin-lightening products, and having celebrities advertise these products; and 2) featuring lighter-skinned actors and actresses in films and television shows. Participants responded to media privileging of lighter complexions in a range of ways. For example, Sunu was negatively affected by media portrayals of shadeism:

> It will remind you or any person that you have a darker skin tone and it is not respected in culture and it is not enough to make you … treat better, so you need to use this product … and make your skin tone fairer. I mean, the message is: darker skin tone is not accepted or darker skin tone is not good. You need to make it fairer, so its affects … it makes you believe that I am not enough good.

In the aforementioned excerpt, Sunu linked the media depiction of darker complexions to women's lived experiences of shadeism in South Asian communities, including being disrespected and ill-treated and feeling the need to use skin-lightening products to gain social acceptance. For many participants, the commercials of skin-lightening products conveyed the popularity of these products, and shadeist messages targeting darker-skinned South Asian women. Shadeism perpetuated through these commercials incorporated the assumption that having a lighter complexion helped woman to establish their careers, "fit in" to society, and be appreciated for looking "good" for their families. Further, participants indicated how the advertisements exploited shadeist narratives for their own profit, and triggered women to be insecure and dissatisfied with their complexions, and uncover a flaw within themselves that

should be changed. The advertisements also led participants to internalize shadeist discourses, as evidenced in Manike's positive perceptions of skin-lightening ads.

Some participants did not watch skin-lightening ads or suspected their credibility. For instance, Tina and Alex (19, Bangladeshi, came to Canada 8 years ago) felt uncertain about using skin-lightening products and questioned their effectiveness and realism. As well, A. (no demographics provided) and Fatima were unaffected or indifferent to the marketing of skin-lightening products. Few participants reported not being exposed to South Asian commercials promoting skin-lightening products for various reasons, such as no subscription to cable television or growing up in Canada. Bunty considered herself fortunate for her lack of exposure to skin-lightening advertisements. Regardless, she believed that these ads would have negative implications for darker-skinned women:

> When it comes to these fairness creams and you watch these ads, … it makes them seem like if you're dark, you're undesirable, you're not smart enough. You're not pretty enough. You're not good enough. And … people are not going to like you. … It just shows that if you're fair, you're more desirable, people will like you, you'll be more successful.

Participants described racist consequences of skin-lightening advertisements. Alex indicated that the underlying idea of these commercials was colonial and that the whiter individuals appeared, the greater value and power they would achieve. Similarly, Anroop said:

> I think it's very damaging, … and it reinforces white supremacy, reinforces this idea that, … looking European is the ideal standard of beauty. … If there are family are people who, … endorse that sort of thing, especially I know in India, … where there's the caste system and … it can be really damaging, people can actually physically harm themselves from these creams because some of them are made with very dangerous ingredients. So,

> … this whole idea of … lighter skin … creates prejudice amongst brown people for dark-skinned folks and for black individuals. I think that, maybe some brown folks don't see black as beautiful because they have been raised to think that lighter skin is beauty, so it creates unhealthy attitudes towards black women too, which I think is really destructive.

In this excerpt, Anroop indicated that commercials of skin-lightening products propagated white supremacy and white beauty ideals amongst South Asians, which led to their enactment of shadeism against "Brown" and "Black" individuals. Along with underscoring media privileging lighter complexions, participants explained not witnessing South Asian representation in the mainstream North American media when they were younger. In particular, Anroop referred to Michael Jackson's skin-lightening cosmetic procedure as an example of idealizing white beauty standards that ensued shadeism.

As I contemplate on my experiences of shadeism in social and cultural contexts, I recount that, when I got married, the beauticians groomed me with lighter shade makeup products, suggesting that the makeup would help me "look good" in my wedding pictures. Fortunately, I do not experience shadeism in social spaces (e.g., school, workplace, and shopping malls) in a Canadian context, with the exception of a specific situation. I used to go to a South Asian beauty salon, wherein the woman would suggest me 'beauty' tips and recommend that I use skin-lightening products to achieve a lighter skin tone. I could not confront her enactment of shadeism out of respect for her; however, I have stopped visiting her salon. As well, I have observed South Asian media privileging lighter-skinned women and an underrepresentation of South Asians in North American media. Specifically, I felt "othered" as I have grown up watching lighter-skinned actors and actresses in Indian (Bollywood) films, television shows, and commercials.

Intersections of Shadeism with Other Forms of Oppression. Participants described experiencing intersecting forms of oppression based on skin shade, gender, race, geographical location, and other body image concerns.

Gender and Race. Shadeism was a gendered phenomenon and was more likely to affect women, as revealed by participants. For example, Manike indicated that her darker-skinned husband appraised her lighter complexion, implying lighter skin tone as a valuable trait amongst women. Further, concerning the intersection of sexism (i.e., prejudice against women) and racism (i.e., prejudice against non-white, racialized individuals), Alex recounted:

> I have … been in a lot of … dominant white spaces where I have been the only Brown person in the room, and that is where it was challenging, not only because of my skin, but because of so many others reasons, and I didn't really feel targeted, and even if I did, it was not just because of my skin, it was because of my age and gender and a lot of other things. … Also, like, in predominant white spaces, I sometimes feel tokenized because I'm a young woman of colour, so I feel like they just want me just so it looks diverse.

In the aforementioned quote, Alex narrated her feelings of being targeted and tokenized due to her age, gender, and race.

Participants described their experiences of racism when asked about negative experiences related to their skin tones. In white dominant contexts, participants reported feeling different, exposed, an "outsider," and a "foreigner" because of their complexions. For example, Anroop struggled to locate makeup products that matched her ethnic skin tone in the 1990s in Canada. She explained receiving suspicious glares at shopping malls due to her ethnicity. Regarding her workplace experiences of racism, she said:

> At my current work, sometimes, visitors or other folks, volunteers, occasionally mistake me for the other South Asian woman who works, and her skin is much darker than mine. … It's funny because I've been mistaken for her a couple of times, … and we joke how they must think that we look similar, but you know, we know that … my family is from Northern India, her family is from Southern India, so it's just funny how people, certain people, they don't really see you, they just see a brown person.

Here, Anroop described her experience of subtle racism, as her colleagues centralized her race to their identity, and homogenized South Asians' outer appearance despite of significant differences.

Further, Jasmin narrated her discriminatory experiences at her workplace that resulted from intersections between her gender and racial identities, as well as involvement in activism:

> I would definitely say I've experienced racism at the university, the different universities I've worked in. And … it's two things. It's the fact that I am a person of color, a woman of color specifically, but that I'm an activist. So that, that comes together because … if I really, really made a big effort, I could pass … that whole … A lot of people of color always trying to pass, right. They talk white, they try to look white, dress, white walk, white, um, think white, you know, everything, right. It's the whole coconut syndrome ... And I, as an activist fight against that, a huge amount … I would say that … racism has definitely impacted me, but it's not just because I'm a Brown woman, it's because I'm an activist and I will speak out and I will make myself a target that way, because there are certain things that are bottom line for me. And, … so I have been, I have been really, really badly attacked, like in the earlier parts of my career. … Lots of really like, really

> pretty traumatic things happen to me. … Again, for those two things. Like … if I had done those things and I was a white man, they would have been okay.

In the aforesaid anecdote, Jasmin recounted being exposed to an intersection of sexism and racism because of her identity as a woman of colour and an activist. She considered that her experiences would have been better if she was a white man and had social privileges based on her racial and gender identities.

Some participants experienced a combination of shadeism and racism because of their skin tones, as they were categorized as racial minorities in Canada. For instance, Maya said:

> I went to one of my cousin's friend's party so … the aunties there, they were pretty shocked, I guess, looking at my skin because again, I guess they … imagine I would be like a white girl or something like that, because they were like, Oh, like you're from Canada. And they have like a very odd, like tone in that, where they thought it was odd.

Here, Maya's relatives unrealistically expected her to be a "white girl" because she lived in Canada. Similarly, Anroop received racist compliments from her relatives in Canada for appearing lighter-skinned. Further, Manike was praised for being too lighter-skinned to be a Sri Lankan woman. Also, Bunty interacted with a South Asian man who was against dating a Black or a Brown girl, and some South Asians in Canada who misunderstood her as "African." In describing South Asians' endorsement of racism toward members of their own ethnic group, Sunu said:

> I can think that … Brown people are doing racism because they thought: Okay … those are my country people and I know my country situation, … so they are also coming from developing country. They are not also that much civilized like white people so they do not deserve my service, I mean, … high-standard service ... So maybe from that point, …

> racism comes that they don't think that we are not white, we are like them so we do not deserve, … good service like white people deserve.

In the aforementioned excerpt, Sunu described South Asians' tendency to associate whiteness with civilization, which led to their perpetuation of racism. Presuming whiteness as civilized was related to the colonial history of South Asia that originated racial hierarchies.

Geographical Context. One participant discerned her experiences of shadeism and racism in Saskatoon, a smaller Prairie city, and Toronto, a larger metropolitan city in Central Canada. Anu H. explained getting pitiful comments about *both* her darker complexion and Indian-Sri Lankan identity within the South Asian community in Saskatoon. She believed that the South Asian community in Saskatoon was more likely to accept individuals with Indian-White biracial identities than those who were Indian-Sri Lankan, implying a privilege associated with white parentage. Also, she compared her experiences of shadeism in her schools in Saskatoon versus Toronto:

> When I first moved to Canada, I was living in Toronto and obviously very multicultural; there was no issue there. I did not feel alienated at all, but when I first moved to Saskatoon … it was the first time in a long time that I ever heard jokes about skin colour and you know, like … if they turn off the lights, they can only see your teeth, or, … that they need flash to take a picture of you …, so that was kind of, like, … strange to me because I hadn't heard those things since maybe I was in grade three or so ... They're the things that people usually grow out of and at the time that I moved to Saskatoon, … I believe in grade eight, so it was quite alarming that people were still thinking like that and I was like, that was very strange, and … obviously it was very frustrating for me and

> not the best, but I also realize that Saskatoon did not have the same, uh, population of people of colour and the communities weren't as built … as they were in Toronto.

In this quote, Anu H. asserted that her experiences of shadeism intensified due to a geographical shift– from a larger, more diverse, metropolitan city, Toronto, to a smaller city, Saskatoon. The influence of geographical context on the magnitude of shadeism underlines the importance of space in such negative experiences.

Body image Concerns. Participants reported body image concerns (e.g., curly hair and body weight) that led to their self-consciousness about their physical appearance or added stress along with the existing concerns related to skin tone. For instance, Anu H. explained that her sense of not "fitting in" deepened because of a combination of shadeism *and* cultural prejudice against curly hair. Alex perceived that body comfort was crucial to being confident, successful, and active in life. However, she felt discomfort around her body, which dissuaded her from being active and influenced her self-perceptions. While Jasmin did not experience shadeism, she narrated:

> The idea of how I look … just like for really almost every woman … how you look is really important. So the whole idea of how beautiful I am and how tall I am … the shapeliness of my body, … there's pressures on … I think on every young woman to … be pretty and to … have this lovely body… All of those things definitely impacted me. … I've gone through my own journey and my own growth, … from my teenage years to my adulthood related to body image and size … but not so much around the shade.

In the above quote, Jasmin described that her appearance-related negative experiences involved concerns about body shape and size, rather than skin shade.

In reflecting on my own experiences, I encounter an intersection of shadeism, racism, sexism, and fatphobia (i.e., prejudice against fat bodies), as I am a darker-skinned South Asian fat woman. Along with shadeism, I feel excluded because of appearing visibly different from white women. Specifically, I received questions, such as "Where are you originally from?" and "Is there a war going on in your country?" and comments such as, "You speak very good English as an immigrant" in Canadian social spaces (e.g., beauty salons and bus stops). I also experience fatphobia within my interpersonal and social contexts in the forms of medicalization of my fat body, blame and judgement for lacking self-control, and pressure to follow the "diet" culture.

Protective Factors Against Shadeism

This theme underscores the intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and cultural factors that buffer against the negative impact of shadeism, or influence how South Asian women in Canada react to shadeist discourses surrounding them.

Intrapersonal Factors.

Coping and Resilience. To cope with interpersonal, social, and cultural experiences of shadeism, participants implemented positive strategies, such as: progressing toward self-acceptance; viewing skin tone as an unchangeable and unique trait and being happy, assured, and satisfied with it; considering darker skin as fashionable due to Western practices of skin-tanning; consciously deciding to not use skin-lightening products; moving on from prior negative experiences; engaging in optimism and self-distraction, and focusing on positive aspects of life; and showing indifference, ignorance, having a "thicker skin" against shadeism, and not taking shadeism seriously. Participants rationalized the shadeist situations by recognizing that white people were not "better looking" because they were white. They also critically pondered the reasons of shadeism, attempted to alter people's shadeist perceptions, and had a sense of

collectivity with other women who experienced shadeism. Further, participants problematized shadeism by initiating a dialogue about its negative impact and suggesting that those who endorsed shadeism are at fault. For example, Anu H. considered shadeism as a "weird" concept in South Asia, given that the minority have white or pale skin tones. In addition, Alex said:

> I'm in a process of decolonizing myself and what starts … just accepting myself and seeing all dark-skinned people as beautiful is one of the ways of decolonizing my mind. And it is very difficult; I'm not gonna to say that …, every day I wake up and I feel beautiful, it's not that. … But it's a process and it's hard work, and some days I don't feel like it, but I want to inspire girls around me, or even my little sister to understand that how we see beauty is very complicated and there is relations of power and violence all incorporated into it, and I think the more … I educate myself it becomes apparent to me, and yeah, that is why I… decided to say that.

As this quote implies, Alex coped and was resilient against shadeism by decolonizing her mindset and being mindful of endorsing shadeist ideas of beauty.

A number of participants dealt with racism targeting their complexions by using positive techniques. For instance, although Simran felt hurt about being treated as an "outsider" in her white dominant school, she adapted to the situation by becoming self-sufficient and problematizing the act of racism instead of her own racial identity. Anroop dismissed her relatives' racist compliments, and used humour to grasp her Canadian experience of homogenization with other South Asians. Further, Anu H. implemented "talking back" as a strategy of resilience:

> When I was in high school, I ended up moving … to … more a white-dominated high school and it … was different for me. … I wouldn't try to make myself smaller. … If

> someone said something, I would talk back. … It's like I made myself bigger and, like, kind of stronger so that no one would say anything. … I think that's unfortunate that you can't just exist as yourself in these situations. … I think now, most people have … the tactic to be a lot stronger, a lot meaner, so that if anyone says anything to you, you're not gonna tolerate it, and—or you look bigger and meaner so that they don't even try it. … Let's say, if I'm walking into a restaurant and it's … only white people, I look very focused. I don't … put my head down. I don't act like I'm not meant to be there, even if sometimes I may feel like I'm not meant to be there. I act like I'm definitely meant to be there and … that's where I'm meant to be.

Here, Anu H. emphasized being vocal as a technique to establish her presence and confront racism. As well, exposure to shadeism and racism directed Anu H. and Jasmin to be honoured of their skin tones and ethnic traditions as adults. For instance, Anu H. was adamant to represent her ethnicity *everywhere*. Jasmin demonstrated her ethnic pride, as she said:

> Just this whole idea of loving myself for exactly who I am. … My happiest moments are when I'm wearing my Bindi, I've got on … salwar kameez pants and then whatever, top, you know, different kind of a top that I feel like wearing and some Indian jewelry, maybe some jewelry from where I was born in Kenya, like just, … the kind of dance that I love to do, which is … a mix of Indian, Middle Eastern, and African dances, which are the things that are in my bones. … I just taught a dance class the other day, which was that world dance kind of thing. So yeah. I've taken it into many spheres of my life.

In this excerpt, Jasmin showed resilience to internalization of racism (i.e., passing as "white"), acknowledging it as a form of self-hatred, which she avoided by being proud of her ethnicity and practicing her ethnic traditions.

Resistance. Participants underscored the importance of education, intervention, activism, and representation to resist shadeism and other adverse outcomes pertinent to darker skin tones. For instance, Anu H. vocalized the need for diversity-based education, specifically gaining knowledge on colonialism, sexism, and shadeism, which drove her passion for activism for this social issue. Simran contended that parents in South Asian families could disrupt the intergenerational transmission of shadeism by teaching their children that "everyone's the same no matter their skin colour." Jasmin denoted the significance of feminist analysis and anti-racism politics in her life, which allowed her to be aware of and confront shadeism. As well, Bunty explained the factors that contributed to her resistance against shadeism:

> I think … something that really helped me the unfair and lovely, and … everybody … posting pictures of themselves and … not worry about being trained to look as light as they can. … And you see … some smaller creators, … they're like makeup artists posting darker-skinned Brown women or South Asian woman, or I should say Brown woman cause we also have West Indians, but … it's just Brown woman in general and that really helped. And I think also … in a way the black community has also helped me growing up because … the way … they are so confident in themselves and the way … they … accept their culture as well and like everything. … I don't want to go to detox cycle forever, but like seeing them and … I … looked as at them as an example when I didn't have much from the Brown community at that time. And that helped me also build some confidence and … learn to accept myself … physically and culturally as well.

Here, Bunty narrated that observing activisms against shadeism and Black community's resilience aided her to cope with shadeism.

Participants stressed upon the significance of representation of South Asians in the mainstream media to normalize darker skin colours. For example, Anroop shared that Beyonce's song, "Brown Skin Girl" positively influenced her self-perceptions and views about her ethnicity when she was 16 years old.

Older Age and Maturity. Most participants highlighted that being older and mature positively influenced how they coped with, were resilient against, and resisted their experiences of shadeism and racism. In childhood and adolescence, they felt exposed and vulnerable to shadeism. For instance, Bunty and Anroop clarified adolescence as a period of susceptibility toward shadeism, given that adolescents were more likely to deal with several life changes such as puberty and the subsequent body-related insecurities. Regarding older age and maturity as a protective factor, Sunu said:

> At first time when I was a child, that time, … I believed in those products. Yeah, those products might … might make my skin tone fairer, better, but later I found that after using … some days …, or I saw others using those, so when I get, … older a little bit, I found that those products, … really don't work. Those are just for advertisements, and I also tried some homemade product that, uh, homemade herbal product, that makes your skin clear sometimes but really, anything will not change your skin tone, what you have born with. Later, I found that. That's why I don't use.

In the aforementioned quote, Sunu described that, when she was younger, she viewed darker complexion a "curse" in her life and used skin-lightening products. Certainly, participants viewed that young age influenced if individuals understood or perpetuated shadeism, with some mentioning an inability to understand the severity of shadeism in childhood, and difficulties in untangling the long-term effects of childhood exposure to shadeism.

As adults, participants understood the inefficacy of skin-lightening products and unrealistic societal expectations for women to meet white beauty ideals. They also emphasized other qualities and characteristics that they embodied, and learned to favourably perceive their complexion. For instance, Alex became aware of the global beauty ideals as she was older:

> I think over time, as I've grown up, I have learned to differentiate between the beauty standards of the part of the world where I'm from versus here, and also that it differs between, let's say, a white Canadian woman versus an Indigenous woman versus a woman of colour, and as I'm growing older and older, I'm becoming more mindful of how I value myself.

Alex also started to be more vocal against shadeism, interacted with other young girls, and encouraged them to love themselves and perceive themselves as beautiful. Further, Bunty recounted learning to positively evaluate her skin tone, and be indifferent toward shadeist experiences, as she matured, received compliments from others, and witnessed activism against shadeism (e.g., *Unfair and Lovely*). Similarly, Anroop stated:

> Now I am 43. If I were answering these questions when I was 16 or younger or … in my 20s, I thought I would have a very different answer because, when I was younger, I did try to—I wasn't as happy about being brown skinned. But now … I feel good about it.

Anroop's statement that she would have had answered the interview questions differently if she was in her 20s implied the influence of age on her feelings toward her skin tone.

Similar to the interviewees, I positively cope with, became resilient against, and resisted shadeism with age and maturity. I began accepting myself and developed self-confidence about my outer appearance when a friend in Canada complimented me for having a beautiful skin. Today, I consider myself beautiful and actively resist prejudice against darker skin colour.

Specifically, I overcame the negative psychological outcomes of shadeism by discovering my passion in building a career as a feminist academic researcher. Through my research, I vocalize how South Asian women are marginalized within their own ethnic communities, one of them being discrimination based on lighter skin tone beauty ideals or shadeism.

Interpersonal Support.

Family Members. Some participants received support from their family members in the form of offering a positive environment and compliments for being beautiful. Participants' family members motivated them to focus on their education and career, rather than worrying about their complexions, as well as prohibited them to lighten their complexions if they desire to do so. In describing the support that she received from her family members, Anu H. explained:

> When I was a kid, … they only sold, like, the white baby dolls and, … my mom asked my aunty in the States to send her a brown baby doll and so after I got that, you know, I was thrilled! So, I feel like my parents went through a lot to ensure that I wouldn't feel like I need to have lighter skin.

Here, Anu H. emphasized the ways her parents protected her against the negative impact of shadeism. She further described that her mother and grandmother supported her by advocating against shadeism and prohibiting her to engage in skin-lightening practices.

Friends. Most participants indicated that their friends did not care about their complexions, and rather, appreciated their physical appearance, personality, and the ability to maintain a natural and good skin. For example, Maya contemplated that having South Asian friends with collective experiences of shadeism was imperative to confront these negative discourses. Although Alex was hesitant to openly discuss the topic of skin-lightening practices with her South Asian friends, they all struggled to accept the narratives about privileging lighter

complexions, and consciously challenged their personal shadeist thoughts (e.g., perceiving a lighter-skinned woman as good-looking). Additionally, Alex said:

> Guys that I'm friends with who are also … of similar ethnic background and they also seem very open-minded and that's because … this is an issue I literally talk to all my friends about and I think … over time, I just have seen them change and become so much more inclusive and aware of the history.

Here, Alex was contented to observe her lighter-skinned friends' gradual awareness of the adverse consequences of shadeism, and vocalizing their opinions against this discourse.

Romantic partners. Participants with romantic partners that their partners were accepting of and complimented their skin tone, and did not perceive darker complexions as "less appealing" or discuss the issue of shadeism. For instance, Jasmin recounted:

> Within … any of the relationships I've had … I was three years in a relationship with a man of Irish heritage and … I'm still in touch with … all my past lovers. So, I talked to them all the time. … I don't think he ever said anything about my skin tone ... So, I don't remember … he's white as the driven snow … he … traveled a lot, spoke really good Spanish had lived in Latin America. … A lot of his friends were Latin Americans and stuff, so he wasn't … what you might call a white bread … kind of a person. … I've had first nations lovers, … I've had a lot of men of color, like racialized men lovers. And so it hasn't really been an issue.

In the aforementioned anecdote, Jasmin described having past romantic relationships with racialized men, who were aware of negative implications of shadeism and racism because of greater exposure to diversities. In addition, Sunu said:

> When I fall in love and that person … made my perception … change[d]. … He has … a very fair skin tone, but still, … he loves the darker skin tone, so he made me believe that … it doesn't matter. Darker skin tone is also beautiful, we are also beautiful … At some point, I … start believ[ing], okay, maybe I am also beautiful.

In the aforesaid quote, it is evident that Sunu had a supportive romantic partner who made her believe in herself and the beauty of darker skin tones.

In relation to interviewees' narratives about interpersonal support, I receive similar levels of support from my family members, relatives, friends, and my husband. They appreciate me for my personality and academic accomplishments and encourage me to work harder.

Social and Cultural Spaces.

Living in Canada and Having a Bicultural Identity. Participants underscored the following factors in a Canadian context that alleviated the harmful impact of shadeism: 1) a lack of interaction or bonding with South Asian communities in Canada; 2) immigrant lives characterized by working hard for survival, rather than affording time and money for skin-lightening practices; 3) growing up in white-dominant neighbourhoods; 4) self-distancing from the colonial ideals of beauty in South Asian landscapes, and in particular, shadeism enacted by extended family members and relatives in their home countries; 4) self-perceptions as smarter compared to white individuals; 5) tan skin tone and braided hairstyles as fashionable for white Canadian women; and, 6) perceptions of Canadian society as "progressive." Specifically, Simran's experience in a white-dominant summer camp was non-racist, wherein she bonded with her white colleagues like a family, as they were understanding toward each other, and prioritized each other's hard work. Alex learned about historical injustices such as shadeism against women in Canada, which positively influenced her definition of beauty and skin tone. She also stated:

> I also talked … to … other immigrant kids here or first-generation Canadian kids here, who are, like, from my similar background. And it is nice to see that they are also recognizing that the way we view beauty is very exclusive, and we need to become more inclusive and value everybody, and that is really nice to see. But again, like I mentioned, that I struggle with it sometimes, I see even kids my age struggling too. So, obviously older people struggle even more to accept this.

As demonstrated in this excerpt, Alex stressed the importance of a collective awareness of shadeism along with other immigrants in Canada, as this safeguarded South Asian women in Canada against the adverse outcomes of shadeism.

Participants underscored the essentialness of multiculturalism and/or a sense of solidarity with other immigrants or people of colour in Canada in abridging the negative impact of shadeism. They described Canada as a nation where individuals honoured each other's culture and were welcoming, appreciative, and accepting of diverse skin tones. Hence, those with school and/or work experiences in Canada reported that they did not feel self-conscious or excluded. For example, Bunty recounted receiving compliments about her skin colour or other physical features from numerous individuals who were Filipinos, Black, East Asians, and Browns at her high school. Similarly, Simran indicated:

> Where I worked, there's … mostly always been more people with colour. … My workplace is always like they never looked at your skin colour, they looked at your work ethics. So that was always nice … For university, this is my first year, so I haven't actually been to, like, in-person classes, but from … what I'm seeing, there's lots of Indians and there's lots of people with colour there. So, there's always … a group that

you can find. If … people are excluding you, then there's always people that you can find that are like you and won't exclude you.

Here, Simran expressed optimism about discovering a multicultural community that would be supportive of her diverse skin colour.

In highlighting residence in Canada as a protective factor, participants expressed greater comfort about their complexions in a Canadian context, and described experiencing shadeism in their home countries. For instance, Anu H. felt that she could be more outspoken and straightforward about her intolerance of shadeism in Canada. However, she felt unable to challenge shadeism in her home country, as these negative discourses were preserved by individuals older than her.

Analogous to the interviewees, living in Canada and having a bicultural identity positively influenced my perceptions of my skin tone. Being a graduate researcher, I work in an "academic bubble," wherein individuals are liberal and openminded. Hence, I do not experience shadeism and racism within the university setting. As well, I am a Canadian citizen and have lived here long enough to call this nation my home. This allows me to distance myself from shadeism in my ethnic community, as Canada is viewed as multicultural and "progressive" with greater acceptance for diverse skin colours because of the pervasiveness of skin-tanning practices (Cafri et al., 2006).

Consequences of Shadeism

This theme highlights the outcomes of shadeism on South Asian Canadian women's perceptions of their skin tone, skin-lightening behaviours, and psychological wellbeing.

Fluid Perceptions of Skin Tone. Participants perceived their skin tone based on how lighter or darker they are in comparison to others in South Asian national, diasporic, and

Canadian contexts. For instance, Simran and Appu perceived their skin tones depending on their immediate environment. Whereas Simran was more comfortable with individuals who were welcoming to ethnic and cultural diversities, Appu felt more welcomed and positive about her complexion when she was surrounded by darker-skinned people. Further, Tina said:

> In terms of evaluating my skin tone, … I compare it to other people, … mainly people in my family, and … people of colour in the media, … specifically Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, actors and actresses, and celebrities. … I consider myself of a medium skin tone—not too dark, not too bright.

As indicated above, Tina perceived her complexion by comparing herself with media personalities. Similarly, Manike perceived herself as "fair" by comparing her skin tone with that of individuals in her ethnic community in Sri Lanka. She was accepting of her diverse ethnicity and described not having a problem with her non-white complexion. Contrarily, Maya felt:

> I feel like if I see commercials or like, if there's like channels that my parents turn on, um, there's still like very, very fair skinned people on the commercials. So I still feel like, you know, even if I see myself on the light side, I still feel like I'm darker in a way. So I think it's a bit odd, but I would say a more relatively on the lighter side.

In this excerpt, Maya expressed her inner conflict about her opinion of her skin tone, as she evaluated her complexion to be on "the lighter side," but felt otherwise when comparing herself with lighter-skinned individuals represented in the media. While some participants evaluated their complexions after comparing them with others in their surroundings, a few of them evaluated their complexions by referring to the comments of others in their social networks. For instance, Anroop considered her skin tone as darker, whereas others viewed her as "not dark." Bunty, however, appraised her skin tone as "about medium to dark" based on what others said:

> When I was younger, I did think I was undesirable for awhile and not pretty enough because you know, I'd hear those comments and then, you know, as I grew and I gained more confidence … As I got older and matured more … I get asked out, you know, like, I have people complimenting me.

As evident above, Bunty became confident about her skin tone as an adult based on others' response toward her, such as receiving compliments or being asked out. Some participants were satisfied with positive experiences pertinent to their complexions. They appreciated their skin tones for being naturally good, clean, pimple-free, healthy with no possibilities of health problems or skin diseases, natural, and reflective of a fashion trend (i.e., tanned skin tone) that several Canadian women attempted to achieve. In fact, Appu did not like using the makeup her mother used to put on her face in childhood; rather, she preferred looking "natural" over lighter-skinned. Relatedly, Jasmin had no qualms viewing herself as the darkest in her family due to her childhood being spent outdoors as an athlete. Also, Anroop valued her darker complexion:

> Now I am at a time when I am really glad to have darker skin. Ah, even now, like, on a really shallow level cause now I am 43 and I know this that a lot of my white friends are much more wrinkled and, you know, their skin is … so sensitive to the sun, and even on that level, I am glad that I have some protection, and I even sometimes wish if I was darker so that I have more protection.

Here, Anroop was satisfied to have a darker complexion, as it is less sensitive to the sun, and protected her skin from its negative effect.

A number of participants referred to their racial and cultural backgrounds to define their skin tone. For example, Jasmin explained:

> I'm definitely on the very light side of the … Brown spectrum. … I don't get confused for being a white person and dark enough to be identified as a South Asian person, anybody who ever guesses, … if they want to know sort of my culture, that the two things they'll guess are South Asian or Persian, and they're both kind of right. Cause I'm a Parsi, right. A thousand years ago, we came from Persia. We'd been in India thousand years. So they're both kind of right. I have that aqualine nose of … a Persian person. So I think my skin tone fits who I am perfectly. And I feel very comfortable in that.

In this excerpt, Jasmin described her complexion as "Brown" by signifying her racial origins and self-identifying as Parsi South Asian. Similarly, Simran was happy about her skin tone being something unique that reflected her ethnic background and traditions. Simultaneously, she was aware of her racial minority status in Canada, as she would be discriminated against for not having lighter skin colour like the European/white Canadians. Finally, Alex perceived her skin tone by emphasizing the intersection between her experiences of shadeism and racism:

> I think mainly in relation to people in my community … because I identity as a Brown person, as a woman of colour, and when it comes to my looks, I will compare myself to people of my origin. … I think over time, as I've grown up, I have learned to differentiate between the beauty standards of the part of the world where I'm from versus here, and also that it differs between, let's say, a white Canadian woman versus an Indigenous woman versus a woman of colour.

Here, Alex evaluated her complexion by focusing on her racial identity and white beauty norms pervasive in South Asian communities.

Like the interview participants, I view myself as darker-skinned by comparing to that of lighter-skinned women in South Asian communities. However, I do not believe in social stigma associated with darker complexions (e.g., ugly and poor).

Engagement in Skin-Lightening Practices. Participants described that skin-lightening practices involved using skin-lightening or "glowing" creams and lighter-shade makeup products, or simply avoiding the outdoors in the sun, to avoid becoming darker-skinned. For example, Anroop used sunscreen to look pale-skinned, following the fashion trends prevalent in the 1990s in Western societies when she was a high school student. However, most participants felt subtly coerced within South Asian familial and community spaces to engage in skin-lightening practices, as Tina explained:

> When I was much younger, I … was in summer camp and I got really bad kind of tan, … I got … much darker and at that point I was, … I felt pressured into, like, you know, doing as much as I could to gain back, like, a brighter skin tone … to get back to the point where … I was before the summer camp. … My parents were mad at me.

This quote denoted that Tina felt forced by her parents to avoid being outside in order to maintain a "brighter" skin tone. Receiving shadeist messages also intimidated participants to use skin-lightening or "glowing" products. Specifically, Maya, Bunty, and Sunu used homemade and herbal products that softened and naturalized their skin tones but did not lighten them. Concerning engagement in skin-lightening behaviours, Appu said:

> Sometimes, I'll think … if I use those things, … I'll be much more … fair. … because in sometimes when I used to … go in sunlight … my skin will get tanned. At that time I'll feel like, no, I'm getting dark, so, should I use some … products to make my skin back to

> normal? Like that, I was pressurized. But then, I just go with the flow so, I don't really give that care that much.

As implied in the above quote, Appu experienced inner conflicts between social pressure to lighten her skin tone and her own perceptions about these practices. Overall, a majority of participants did not use skin-lightening products or lighter-shade makeups because of: 1) viewing their skin tone as natural, being happy and satisfied with it, and having no interest to engage in skin-lightening practices; 2) fearing they would have unnaturally or artificially "fair" skin, and encountering physical risks of skin-lightening products' ingredients; 3) believing that skin tone should not be something to worry about; 4) being discouraged by family members to use skin-lightening products/or too young to ask parents to buy these products; 5) the expense, uncertainty, inaccessibility, and inefficacy of skin-lightening products; 6) distrusting white beauty ideals and skin-lightening commercials, and recognizing that the images portrayed in the commercials were photoshopped; and 7) not observing any change in appearance after using skin-lightening products. Jasmin, Maya, and Alex discussed embracing a feminist, decolonial perspective and an awareness of European colonialization as the source of shadeism, which prohibited them from engaging in skin-lightening practices as adults.

Some participants, who did not use skin-lightening products, used makeup products to achieve lighter skin shades, and look fairer and "prettier" at traditional weddings in South Asian communities. As well, Tina used organic materials (e.g., lime juice) instead, as she was uncertain of the products' impact and was self-conscious about having a darker complexion. Racist discourses within a Canadian context also led certain participants to use lighter-shade makeups to achieve whiter skin tones. For instance, Anroop explained:

> As a child, I actually thought when I grew up, I would be white because I had absolutely no, other than my parents, no visual image of a[n] adult brown woman, so I have these ideas that if I put on white makeup or, you know, pink foundation or whatever, that maybe would make my skin light.

Anroop's excerpt indicated that absence of social representation propagated the desire to use makeup in order to become lighter-skinned.

Participants who did not lighten their skin were involved in other skincare practices, such as using facial creams/lotions to moisturize their skin and evade dryness, scars, and pimples.

Similar to most of the interviewees, I have used *Fair and Lovely* in childhood, as I have observed girls and women in South Asian communities doing the same. Growing up, I recognized shadeism propagated through the marketing of skin-lightening products; thus, I do not use them. However, I use lighter-shade makeups (e.g., foundation and facepower) to appear brighter-skinned. I wonder if this is an act of internalizing white beauty ideals or coping with shadeism in South Asian spaces.

Psychological Wellbeing. Participants experienced a range of psychological outcomes due to their experiences of shadeism in interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts. They felt bewilderment, discomfort, concern, sadness, annoyance, and anger toward shadeist discourses; horrified about skin-lightening practices; and inferior, shy, self-conscious, unlucky, less confident, and afraid for not having lighter complexion. For example, Bunty expressed guilt over relying on other people's comments to build a confident identity. As well, Sunu recollected feeling heartbroken as a young child, believing herself not loved by the Almighty and as "less than" lighter-skinned women in South Asian communities. Certainly, participants felt alienated

and not beautiful enough," internalizing white beauty ideals and a desire to achieve lighter complexions. In relation to this, Manike said:

> I think it's good. … Women should be pretty. Right. So, it's good if they can use them, if they can afford them, I don't have any … negative response towards it. It's good.

Internalization of shadeism was exhibited in Manike's appreciative response to using skin-lightening products. Several participants felt worse and inferior when they received negative social messages about their skin tone and compared themselves with lighter-skinned South Asian women – a process known as *downward social comparison* (see Tiggemann & Polivy, 2010). Some also experienced inner conflicts between accepting their darker skin tone and being affected by shadeist discourses in social networks and their ethnic community. For example, Alex indicated:

> There's … two sides to it, …, the fact that I understand why we are … valuing lighter skin more, … and understanding that makes me become a more self-aware person and a better citizen, I would argue, because I can tackle my racist or colourist … things, that happen around me head-on, but also, … at the end of the day, I'm a human being and I have feelings and … seeing these kind of ideas still prosper in our community hurts me, especially because I don't necessarily … have lighter skin, so it's not … I benefit from it.

Alex's narrative indicated that resistance against shadeism became difficult due to the negative outcome of shadeism on her mental health, such as feelings of hurt by witnessing shadeism being disseminated in South Asian communities.

Intersections of shadeism and racism led participants to feel ashamed and hesitant about their ethnic identities, and attempt to "fit in" to white dominant culture. For example, Anu H.

perceived black accessories as "gross" and did everything in her power to avoid appearing racialized. In addition, Jasmin narrated:

> I definitely imbibed this idea that it would be so nice if I could be white. I remember thinking that when I was really small, like maybe I was five and I looked in the mirror and I remember thinking, 'Oh, the veins behind my tongue are darker than the white kids veins' behind their tongues.' I wish mine were lighter. … I definitely had the immigrant child experience of wishing – it wasn't just about skin tone. It was the whole package of, … look different and all of that.

Here, Jasmin desired to be white as an "immigrant child" because of the dominance of beauty ideals influenced by white privilege. As well, Anroop considered being exoticized, called "brown sugar," by white men to be positive discrimination. Further, Anu H. perceived that making herself less visible allowed her to avoid drawing attention to her race.

In reflecting on how experiences of shadeism and racism have affected my psychological wellbeing, I realize that I am self-conscious about my skin tone when I attend South Asian events (e.g., cultural functions). Although I am self-confident and believe that darker complexion is beautiful, I find challenging shadeist discourses a difficult task. For example, sometimes, I look at myself in the mirror and wonder what if I were lighter-skinned.

Discussion

Phase II explored South Asian Canadian women's experiences of shadeism in interpersonal, social, and cultural spaces, and in relation to media depictions of women with lighter complexions. Phase II also outlined intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural factors that protected South Asian women in Canada against the adverse outcomes of shadeism. Finally,

Phase II discussed the repercussions of shadeism on South Asian Canadian women's perceptions of their skin tones, skin-lightening behaviours, and psychological wellbeing.

Overall, participants believed that shadeism began in the historical era of European colonization in South Asia. Consequently, lighter skin tones are thought to be pretty, attractive, and desirable, and women with lighter complexions are deemed marriageable in modern South Asian communities. Consistently, Suchit (2016) concluded that "shadeism was a product of colonization to maintain the cloud of whiteness, and established on the notion that dark skin represents savagery, irrationality, ugliness, and inferiority, which was believed to have started because slave owners would use skin colour to allot jobs on the plantations" (p. 6).

Findings in this study are consistent with Dhillon's (2016) results, as South Asian women in both studies experienced shadeism perpetuated by their family members, relatives, friends, ethnic diasporic members, and media, which had unfavourable outcomes for their psychological processes (e.g., low self-esteem). Whereas Dhillon (2016) conducted their research with South Asian women living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the present study recruited South Asian women from across Canada, although most of the participants were in Saskatchewan. Thus, this study builds upon Dhillon's (2016) work and increases understanding of shadeism to a broader Canadian landscape.

Phase II also uncovered that South Asian women in Canada who referred to positive aspects of living in this nation, such as multiculturalism and the ability to self-distance from shadeist viewpoints of their relatives in their home countries, as well as having a bicultural identity, felt safeguarded from the negative consequences of shadeism. However, biculturalism appeared to complicate participants' skin-tone related experiences, as they negotiated between South Asian practices of skin-lightening and Canadian practices of skin-tanning (Cafri et al.,

2006). For South Asian women in Canada, experiences of shadeism and/or racism depended on their embodiment of bicultural (i.e., South Asian Canadian) identity, as they faced shadeism within South Asian Canadian communities, and racism in white-dominant Canadian contexts. Earlier researchers have found racial and cultural factors influencing body image development and skin tone aesthetics for Asian Americans, as they negotiate between culturally distinct beauty ideals while engaging in bicultural socialization (Cheng et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2017).

Phase II results mirror the longstanding debate on whether shadeism and racism are interrelated or distinct. When asked about negative experiences pertinent to their skin tones, several interviewees conflated shadeism and racism, and/or narrated experiencing both. For them, darker skin tones were markers of shadeism or racism based on their lived experiences across South Asian and Canadian cultures. For instance, lighter-skinned South Asian Canadian female interviewees (e.g., Simran and Jasmin) conflated shadeism with racism because of "fitting" into lighter skin tone ideals of their ethnic communities, and being racially marginalized within a Canadian context. For darker-skinned South Asian Canadian female interviewees (e.g., Sunu and Bunty), intracultural shadeism was more salient, with which they coped by endorsing that Canada is multicultural and diverse skin colours are accepted. This finding is similar to those reported by other researchers, who argue that shadeism and racism share analogous qualities, manifestations, and outcomes. However, unlike racism, shadeism refers to discrimination based on skin shade and phenotypes against individuals within the same ethnic group (Dixon & Tellas, 2017; Eley, 2017). Campbell (2020) argued that researchers sidestepping the issue of shadeism by conceptualizing it as the same as racism discounts the experiences of darker-skinned racialized women in Canada.

The interview themes suggested that the negative implications of shadeism differed for participants throughout their developmental stages of life, and that they were more susceptible to shadeism when they were younger than as adults. Regardless, childhood and adolescent exposure to shadeism had long-term effects on participants' self-perceptions. This finding aligns with previous literature, indicating that shadeism is "passed on" subconsciously or unconsciously through interactions with family and societal surroundings at an early age amongst South Asians, which then influences their developmental processes (Sharda, 2020; Suchit, 2016). In body image scholarship, researchers have indicated that women are more dissatisfied with their bodies during puberty; however, with age and maturity, they are more accepting of their bodies (Tatangelo et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2017).

Phase II documented South Asian women's coping, resilience (e.g., self-acceptance and indifference toward shadeism), and resistance strategies (e.g., anti-racist, decolonial, and feminist activisms; and positive media depictions of darker-skinned South Asian women). Consistently, previous literature has highlighted African women's resilience against colourism, and active social media campaigns within South Asians to combat shadeism. For instance, in a qualitative study, Pearson-Trammell (2010) found that African American women were resilient to colourism because of community support, supportive social interactions, maturation, validation and acknowledgement of colourist experiences, passing affirmations to the next generations, finding power in awareness of colourism, positive reinforcement, self-love, and self-affirmation. Concerning social media campaigns by South Asian activists, #UnfairAndLovely confronts the growing popularity of skin bleaching creams, and "Dark is Beautiful" creates awareness about media bias for lighter complexions and celebrates beauty beyond colour (Sambhi, 2016).

When I interviewed participants in Phase II, I noticed several resemblances between our experiences of shadeism and racism in interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts, and wished to share my own experiences of shadeism. However, I intended to emphasize participants' voices and create a space for them to share their experiences. Thus, I did not shift the focus of our conversations to my experiences. This decision aligns with Rice's (2009) reflexivity about ethical challenges in researching and writing women's embodied lives. In conducting a research project on the lived experiences of fat women in Canada, Rice reflected whether disclosing her "secrets" recentralizes her own embodiment and disrupts participants to tell their own stories. The author preferred to centralize participants' narratives, so as to assure them about her "ethical intentions in representing their stories" (Rice, 2009; p. 254).

Limitations and Future Directions. There were two limitations associated to Phase II. First, there was a need for greater specificity in interview questions. For example, when participants were asked to describe their negative experiences related to their skin tones, some described their experiences of shadeism while some narrated their racist experiences. Regardless, it was a purposeful decision to avoid asking participants the differences between concepts of shadeism and racism in order to allow a better flow of their stories. In underscoring participants' experiences linked with their skin tones, Phase II offers an in-depth insight on the intricacies of South Asian women's lived experiences when they are discriminated against for not conforming to white privilege and lighter skin tone ideals both within Canadian South Asian and mainstream (white-dominant) spaces. Considering the debate of shadeism and racism as interconnected or discrete (e.g., Dixon & Tellas, 2017), empirical studies in future should explore how South Asian Canadian women define and differentiate between shadeism and racism, and in what ways their narratives of shadeism and racism overlap or are exclusive.

Second, Phase II was a general overview of shadeism experienced by South Asian Canadian women in interpersonal, social, and cultural settings. Thus, participants were not asked to specifically narrate their systemic experiences of skin tone-based discrimination. Concerning this, Phase II interviewees revealed the negative impact of shadeism and racism on their psychological wellbeing (e.g., internalization of white beauty ideals, inner conflicts, shame, and hesitation). To cope with these adverse outcomes, South Asian women in Canada are likely to access mental health services. Also, Dhillon (2016) documented that the field of ethnic dermatology, which pathologizes non-white skin, has witnessed a significant growth in Canada. Specifically, this field perpetuates the notion that non-white skin is a 'disease' called hyperpigmentation (i.e., high degree of pigmentation or "brown spots" on face) that can be treated using scientifically and medically sanctioned skin-lightening products and procedures (Bascaramurty, 2011; Dhillon, 2016). Thus, future studies are recommended to explore South Asian Canadian women's shadeist and racist experiences in various institutional contexts, such as mental healthcare services, as well as beauty, medical, and dermatological clinics.

General Discussion

This study examined: 1) the correlations between South Asian Canadian women's perceptions of their skin tones, skin-lightening behaviours, and mental health (Phase I); 2) the role of body image and appearance-related attitudes, and bicultural (South Asian Canadian) identity integration as moderators in these associations (Phase I); and 3) South Asian Canadian women's shadeist experiences in their interpersonal, social, and cultural worlds, and the implications of these experiences on their psychological wellbeing and identity (Phase II).

In the next section, the findings of this thesis were summarized by adopting the theoretical lens of objectification, diasporic transnational feminism, and transnational model of gender and migration (Campt & Thomas, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Levitt, 2011).

Theoretical Implications

According to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), South Asian women in Canada who evaluate their skin tones as darker negatively perceive their physical appearance because of internalizing shadeist beauty ideals perpetuated by their ethnic communities. Self-objectification tendencies also leads them to lighten their skin tones to "fix" their appearances. Experiences of shadeism and self-objectification results in South Asian Canadian women's negative psychological health outcomes (e.g., inferiority, shyness, and a lack of confidence).

The frameworks of diasporic transnational feminism (Campt & Thomas, 2008) and transnational model of gender and migration (Levitt, 2011) highlight the role of "space" in experiences and outcomes of shadeism amongst South Asian women in Canada. Specifically, the diasporic transnational feminism (Campt & Thomas, 2008) emphasizes these women's diasporic perspectives on shadeism, based on their negotiation of their ethnic and Canadian ideologies related to their skin tones. This theory also accounts for the negative outcomes of global and capitalist skin-lightening industry, such as being affected by the notions that darker skin tone was undesirable. Additionally, the transnational model of gender and migration (Levitt, 2011) offers an explanation of South Asian Canadian women's process of negotiation. As such, they "bring in" their shadeist ideas and skin-lightening practices (i.e., social remittances) from their homelands. They perceive Canada as multicultural and diverse, and witness the prevalence of skin-tanning practices (Cafri et al., 2006); thus, they feel that darker complexions are desirable and accepted, and are able to self-distance from shadeist discourses pervasive in their home

countries. Concurrently, they experience racism in Canadian broader contexts, and shadeism within South Asian national and diasporic communities because of negative connotations associated with non-white racial identities, and not conforming to lighter skin tone ideals and skin-lightening practices (i.e., global values packages). This negotiation process is influenced by South Asian Canadian women's subjectivity, autonomy, and authority (i.e., vernacularization; Levitt, 2011), which in turn shapes their gender performance in Canadian mainstream and South Asian spaces. Given that shadeism is a gendered construct, as evident in Phase II, the women performed their gender by not lightening their skin tones when their ethnic values were integrated with Canadian ideologies. In the case of a lack of integration of South Asian and Canadian ideologies, South Asian women in Canada attempt to achieve a lighter complexion in response to their shadeist experiences in South Asian spaces (e.g., home or diasporic communities).

Proposed Conceptual Model

A conceptual model was developed based primarily on Phase II findings that offers a detailed insight about shadeism for South Asian women living in Canada. Figure 1 presents a visual depiction of the model, and the section below outlines its core tenets.

Shadeism and Racism in Canadian South Asian and White-Dominated Spaces

The first tenet describes the contexts of experiences pertinent to skin tone for South Asian women in Canada, namely shadeism and racism, which differ across South Asian, South Asian Canadian (diasporic), and Canadian mainstream spaces, depending on social attitudes toward darker and lighter complexions. Darker-skinned South Asian women experience shadeism in their home countries, as they receive messages within interpersonal and social spaces that their darker skin tones were not beautiful, worthy, or marriageable. As they immigrate to Canada, they

are exposed to shadeism *and* racism in Canadian South Asian and mainstream contexts because of white privilege (i.e., the perception of whiteness as the "norm"). Contrarily, lighter-skinned South Asian women are socially advantaged because of their complexions within their ethnic communities, both in their homelands and in a South Asian Canadian context. However, in Canadian mainstream spaces, they experience racism because of their non-white skin colour. Two factors that preserve shadeism and racism toward South Asian women in Canada are: 1) South Asian media favouring lighter-skinned women and Canadian media underrepresenting South Asians; and 2) the multibillion-dollar skin-lightening industry.

Outcomes of Shadeism

The second tenet explains how shadeism and racism affect South Asian women's perceptions of their skin tones, skin-lightening behaviours, and psychological wellbeing in Canada. South Asian women in Canada perceive their complexions negatively and engage in skin-lightening practices, depending on social stigma associated with darker complexions. Adverse psychological outcomes due to experiencing shadeism and racism are: negative perceptions of and fixing appearance behaviours, engagement in self-objectification, not considering their skin tones as "beautiful," internalizing white beauty ideals; and a sense of exclusion, "otherness" and being "different" within white-dominant spaces in Canada.

Protective factors against shadeism mitigate the negative outcomes of shadeism. Similarly, intersections of social identities (e.g., gender, race, and culture) influences how South Asian women in Canada respond to and are affected by shadeist and racist narratives.

Protective Factors and Intersecting Identities

The third tenet discusses intrapersonal (e.g., coping, resilience, and resistance, as well as older age and maturity), interpersonal (e.g., support from families, friends, and romantic

partners), and social and cultural factors (e.g., living in Canada and having a bicultural identity) that protect South Asian women in Canada against the adverse impact of shadeism and racism. The protective factors also influence how these women react to and impacted by shadeism and racism within Canadian South Asian and mainstream (white-dominated) contexts. For example, in seeking familial, community, and Canadian cultural support, South Asian women in Canada develop a "thick skin," accept their skin tones, and decolonize their perceptions of beauty (e.g., believing that darker complexions are beautiful), and not be influenced by shadeism and racism.

Experiencing marginalization based on intersections of social identities (e.g., gender, race, culture, geographical context, and further body image concerns) affect how South Asian women in Canada respond to and are affected by shadeist and racist discourses. For instance, South Asian Canadian women experience multiple forms of discrimination because of their ethnic (i.e., South Asian) and gender identities (i.e., women). Body image concerns (e.g., not conforming to thin body ideals and having curly hairs) exacerbate their discriminatory experiences, as well as adverse psychological (e.g., greater self-consciousness) and behavioural outcomes (e.g., engaging in skin-lightening practices and "fitting" into the diet culture). Living in smaller Canadian cities (e.g., Saskatoon) as opposed to larger and metropolitan ones (e.g., Toronto) also increase the odds of experiencing shadeism and racism in social spaces (e.g., schools).

The proposed conceptual model adopts an intersectionality framework and integrates multiple levels of analysis to consider experiences and implications of shadeism and racism within intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts. Along with underscoring the "problems," the model incorporates positive psychological approaches by underscoring protective factors against the negative impact of shadeism for South Asian Canadian women. It

is vital to explore the model comprehensively in future studies to understand its usefulness and applicability in developing interventions that enhance positive experiences and wellbeing for South Asian women in Canada.

Final Considerations and Future Directions

There is an omission of literature on the experiences of South Asian women in Canada, as they represent an intersectionally marginalized group with distinct experiences based on their race, culture, and gender. Majority of non-South Asian researchers are unaware of employing cultural lens to examine social issues relevant to South Asians. South Asian women in Canada possibly are assumed as "vulnerable" because of their intersecting identities; thus, they are believed to only have "problematic" perceptions and experiences that should be assessed. In response to these pervasive assumptions and the absence of literature on shadeism, the current study offers a synopsis of shadeism, highlighting negative experiences *and* protective factors, amongst South Asian women in Canada from intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and cultural perspectives. This solicits a call for action from other researchers to depict South Asian women in Canada as individuals with stories of empowerment and resistance, which occurs by adopting positive psychological and intersectional approaches and *not* problematizing the experiences of South Asian women in Canada.

It is recommended that future studies compare shadeist experiences between diverse samples of South Asian Canadian women (e.g., heterosexual/straight vs. queer and able-bodied vs. disabilities) and South Asians (e.g., darker-skinned vs. lighter-skinned South Asian women; South Asian men, women, and persons with diverse gender identities; women across various South Asian communities; and South Asian women vs. other racialized women). Although the current research focuses solely on South Asian women, studies focusing on South Asian men's

perspectives on shadeism are critical avenues for future inquiry, as four South Asian cisgender men responded to Phase I survey. Consistently, men (n = 746) surveyed in Shroff et al.'s (2018) study expressed a strong understanding of the attractiveness associated with having lighter skin, and concerns related to the need to lighten their skin tones. In addition to including diverse South Asian participants in the study sample, recruitment and methodological strategies that researchers could adopt in future studies are discussed below.

Prior to data collection, the target sample size was estimated to be 300 for Phase I (online survey) and 30 for Phase II (virtual interviews) to ensure sufficient statistical power for group-based testing. However, the current study recruited 169 participants for Phase I and 13 for Phase II, with many of them located in Saskatchewan. Given the smaller sample size due to recruitment barriers, it would be best addressed as a pilot study that future researchers could build on. Nevertheless, difficulties in recruiting participants for this study could be because of various reasons. For instance, the current study was undertaken in the COVID-19 global pandemic. Possibly, South Asian women in Canada may be more involved in coping with pandemic-related stress, rather than getting involved in this study. This was evident in one of the South Asian organization's email response when asked for potential assistance in participant recruitment.

To address recruitment barriers and select a larger sample of South Asian women with diverse backgrounds, researchers are advised to consider the following potential barriers and strategies to address them, as outlined by William (2018):

- South Asian women in Canada may be unaware of research studies being undertaken on relevant social issues (e.g., shadeism) because of the disengagement between academia and South Asian communities. These can be addressed via targeted advertising and education (e.g., social media and online forum posts) within South Asian communities.

- South Asian women in Canada may distrust and feel a sense of disconnection with white and/or male researchers who may not understand the negative consequences of shadeism. This can be handled by selecting South Asian female researchers, and being transparent about the research process, similar to what was done in the current study.
- Language barriers may deter non-academic South Asian Canadian women from participating in studies conducted by English-speaking researchers. This can be addressed by having South Asian language options (e.g., Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu) and considering a community research liaison.

Taking William's (2018) recommendations into account, future studies can incorporate *community-based participatory action research*, defined as a collaborative research approach that involves relevant stakeholders throughout the research, from developing a research question, collecting and analyzing data, and sharing research findings (Gannan, 2013). Thus, researchers examining shadeism amongst South Asian women in Canada are advised to include South Asian members in their research teams, who can speak South Asian languages, and consult about research topic, methodology, and findings with them. Researchers can do so by:

- Attending South Asian cultural events (e.g., religious functions, such as Eid and Diwali; Bengali New Year; Global Village; and FolkFest);
- Interacting with significant community members (e.g., association presidents); and Get involved in grassroot nonprofit organizations (e.g., Laadliyan: Celebrating and Empowering Daughters and SOCH: South Asian Mental Health[5]).

Practical Implications Based on Findings

The current study explored experiences and implications of shadeism, and protective factors against it across three levels of analysis:

- Intrapersonal (e.g., engaging in self-objectification, negative perceptions of physical appearance, and self-consciousness as consequences of shadeism; and coping, resilience, resistance, and older age and maturity as proteective factors)
- Interpersonal (e.g., receiving shadeist messages from family, relatives, and friends as experiences of shadeism; and support from family, friends, and romantic partners as protective factors); and
- Social and cultural (e.g., experiencing shadeism and racism in South Asian Canadian communities; and racism in Canadian white dominant spaces; and living in Canada and having a bicultural identity as protective factors).

Should future studies examine experiences and outcomes of shadeism in systemic contexts, "systemic" is recommended as a fourth level of analysis. Recognizing the sociodemographic differences by recruiting diverse participants and employing methodologies that address recruitment barriers (e.g., community-based participatory action research) across the aforesaid contexts aids Canadian social institutions (e.g., education, employment, healthcare, and nonprofit organizations) to develop appropriate services (e.g., educational workshops, individual counseling, support groups, and resource toolkits) for particular groups of people. For example, the social institutions can offer educational workshops to South Asian Canadian families and communities, defining shadeism and highlighting its deteriorating consequences for women in their communities. They can provide individual counseling and support groups to South Asian Canadian women who experience marginalization within their ethnic communities, including shadeism. Also, the social institutions can develop resource toolkits (e.g., infographics on "red flags" of shadeism and confronting shadeist instances within interpersonal, social, and cultural spaces) to aid South Asian women in Canada in problematizing shadeism and vocalizing their

own experiences dealing with this phenomenon. Finally, the institutions can create interventional models to reduce the adverse outcome of shadeism; for example, they can design a workshop, where South Asian women in Canada are informed of various activisms that contest lighter skin tone privilege and white beauty ideals, and then, are asked to describe their feelings and perceptions about their skin tones and general discourses of shadeism. By offering the aforementioned interventions and services, the social institutions aid South Asian Canadian women in their process of coping with unique experiences of shadeism in South Asian Canadian diasporic landscapes.

Conclusion

The present study emphasized the social problem of women being judged based on their physical appearance across transnational borders and cultural spaces. The study also documented the adverse impact of shadeism on South Asian women in Canada, and in so doing, contested white beauty ideals in South Asian Canadian contexts, and provided a platform for women in these communities to vocalize and resist their experiences of shadeism. This study represented a preliminary work to bridge the literature gaps in shadeism in a Canadian context by exploring this topic from intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and cultural lenses. As well, the study evidenced a conceptual model that incorporates three tenets: 1) context: shadeism, racism, and skin colour; 2) negative psychological wellbeing; and 3) protective factors against shadeism. It is recommended that social institutions in Canada (e.g., education, workplace, healthcare, and nonprofits) adopt a cultural lens when offering services and initiatives (e.g., educational workshops, individual counseling, and support groups, as well as resource toolkits) to support South Asian women in their oppressive experiences involving shadeism. The social institutions can collaborate with ongoing media activisms (e.g., #UnfairAndLovely and #DarkisBeautiful;

Sambhi, 2016) to advocate against the propagation of shadeism in racialized communities and demarcate the idea of “beauty” in a more all-encompassing manner.

Endnotes

1. *Body image* is defined as a multidimensional construct emphasizing individuals' thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes about their physical appearance (National Eating Disorders Association, 2018).

2. In response to years of backlash for perpetuating prejudice against darker complexions, Unilever renamed *Fair and Lovely* to *Glow and Lovely*, dropping the word "fair" from its name and removing references to "whitening" or "lightening" on product descriptions (Jones, 2020, 25 June). However, several critics have questioned this step; specifically, whether renaming fairness creams can prevent the implications of shadeism or colourism for darker-skinned women (Pandey, 2020, 26 June).

3. In a news report, Tomlinson and colleagues (2020, February 7) revealed that *Fair and Lovely* did not contain potentially harmful ingredients, as verified in lab tests conducted by Marketplace, a CBC series that reveal slick slams and scam marketing claims. However, Unilever does not sell *Fair and Lovely* skin-lightening products in Canada.

4. Sahay and Piran (1997) assessed skin colour preferences by employing a visual analogue scale with the terms 'white' and 'dark brown' as the left and right anchor points, respectively.

5. The website link for *Laadliyan - Celebrating and Empowering Daughters* is: https://www.laadliyan.com. The website link for *SOCH – South Asian Mental Health* is: https://www.sochmentalhealth.com.

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Table 1. Participants' Sociodemographic Profile (N = 169)

	N	***%***
Gender Identity		
Cisgender women	165	97.6
Trans women	1	.6
Gender nonbinary	2	1.2
Did not mention	1	.6
Ethnicity		
South Asian	167	98.8
Mixed/Southern Border of Asia	2	1.2
South Asian Nationality*		
Afghanistan	5	3.0
Bangladesh	30	17.8
Bhutan	1	.6
India	76	45.0
Nepal	4	2.4
Pakistan	37	21.9
Sri Lanka	15	8.9
Birth in Canada		
Yes	49	29.0
No	120	71.0
Frequency of Skin-Lightening Behaviours		
Yes	20	11.8
No	149	88.2
Skin-Lightening in 30 days		
1-2 times a week		
3-4 times a week	8	4.7
Everyday	7	4.1
I have not lightened my skin in the past 30 days	2 151	1.2 89.3

Note. * indicates missing data.

Table 1. Participants' Sociodemographic Profile (N = 169) (cont'd)

	N	***%***
Skin-Lightening in 6 months		
1-2 times a week	12	7.1
3-4 times a week	9	5.4
Everyday	2	1.2
I have not lightened my skin in the past 6 months	145	86.3
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian	4	2.4
Bisexual	16	9.5
Heterosexual/Straight	137	81.1
Asexual	2	1.2
Queer	6	3.6
Pansexual	4	2.4
Highest Level of Education		
High School	46	27.2
Diploma/College	7	4.1
Undergraduate Degree	66	39.1
Master's Degree	31	18.3
PhD Degree	14	8.3
Professional Designation	5	3.0
Annual Household Income*		
Less than $10,000	15	8.9
$10,001 to $20,000	9	5.3
$20,001 to $30,000	12	7.1
$30,001 to $40,000	13	7.7
$40,001 to $50,000	9	5.3
$50,001 to $60,000	13	7.7
$60,001 to $70,000	6	3.6
$70,001 to $80,000	8	4.7
$80,001 to $90,000	8	4.7
$90,001 to $100,000	10	5.9
Above $100,000	20	11.8

Note. * indicates missing data.

Table 1. Participants' Sociodemographic Profile (N = 169) (cont'd)

	N	***%***
Current Residence: Province		
Alberta	12	7.1
British Columbia	16	9.5
Manitoba	4	2.4
New Brunswick	1	.6
Northwest Territories	1	.6
Nova Scotia	2	1.2
Nunavut	1	.6
Ontario	38	22.5
Quebec	2	1.2
Saskatchewan	91	53.8
Yukon	1	.6

Table 2. Scale Descriptives for All Measures (N = 169).

Scale	Mean (SD)	Midpoint	Possible Range	Actual Range	Alpha Score (CI)
Skin_Eval*	48.70 (19.61)	50	0-100	0-96	
MHI-SF	56.39 (15.92)	62	18-106	18-88	.940 (.925-.952)
BICSI-AF	24.94 (7.70)	25	10-40	10-40	.931 (.915-.946)
BICSI-PRA*	28.96 (6.68)	27.5	11-44	9-44	.882 (.853-.908)
CARSAL*	26.58 (6.50)	20	5-35	3-35	.881 (.850-.908)
CARVAL	29.60 (12.70)	32	8-56	8-56	.958 (.948-.967)
SOBBS	49.58 (17.06)	56	14-98	14-91	.917 (.897-.935)
BII-V2*	77.34 (15.78)	68	17-119	29-116	.854 (.819-.885)
BII-HAR*	40.48 (13.73)	40	10-70	10-70	.916 (.896-.934)
BII-BLEND*	36.86 (7.64)	28	7-49	3-49	.823 (.778-.861)

Note. * Denotes missing data. CI = confidence interval. Skin_Eval = Skin Tone Evaluation; MHI-SF = Mental Health Inventory (Short Form); BICSI-AF = Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory – Appearance Fixing; BICSI-PRA = Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory – Positive Rational Acceptance; CARSAL = Centre for Appearance Research Salience Scale; CARVAL = Centre for Appearance Research Valence Scale; SOBBS = Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviours Scale; BII-V2 = Bicultural Identity Integration (Version 2); BII-HAR = Bicultural Identity Integration – Harmony vs Conflict; and BII-BLEND = Bicultural Identity Integration – Blendedness vs Compartmentalization.

Table 3. Bivariate Correlations Between Key Variables (N = 169)

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Skin_Eval	--	.090	.055	.041	.092	.066	.003	-.041	**.240****	.102	-.013	-.043	.050
2. SkinLight-YN	.090	--	**.837****	**.802****	.052	**.163***	.104	.063	.051	**.302****	**-.183***	-.065	**-.261****
3. SkinLight-30D	.055	**.837****	--	**.895****	.052	.095	.110	.018	.023	**.297****	-.115	-.011	**-.216****
4. SkinLight-6M	.041	**.802****	**.895****	--	.034	**.154***	.101	.062	.053	**.323****	**-.195***	-.052	**-.308****
5. MHI-SF	.092	.052	.028	.034	--	**.396****	-.041	.110	**.539****	**.340****	**-.369****	**-.348****	-.137
6. BICSI-AF	.066	**.163***	.095	**.154***	**.396****	--	-.024	**.539****	**.498****	**.690****	**-.358****	**-.389****	-.040
7. BICSI-PRA	.003	.104	.110	.101	-.041	-.024	--	.095	**-.219****	-.015	.027	.096	-.119
8. CARSAL	-.041	.063	.018	.062	.110	**.539****	.095	--	**.207****	**.493****	**-.202****	**-.211****	-.038
9. CARVAL	**.240****	.051	.023	.053	**.539****	**.498****	**-.219****	**.207****	--	**.490****	**-.294****	**-.331****	-.012
10. SOBBS	.102	**.302****	**.297****	**.323****	**.340****	**.690****	-.015	**.493****	**.490****	--	**-.316****	**-.319****	-.079
11. BII-V2	-.013	-.183	-.115	**-.195***	**-.369****	**-.358*****	.027	**-.202****	**-.294****	**-.316****	--	**.875****	**.493****
12. BII-HAR	-.043	-.065	-.011	-.052	**-.348****	**-.389*****	.096	**-.211****	**-.331****	**-.319****	**.875****	--	.009
13. BII-BLEND	.050	-.261**	-.216**	-.308**	-.137	-.040	-.119	-.038	-.012	-.079	.493**	.009	--

Note. ** p < .001. * p < .05. Skin_Eval = Skin Tone Evaluation; SkinLight-YN = Skin-lightening Behaviours – Yes or No; SkinLight-30D = Skin-lightening Behaviours – 30 Days; SkinLight-6M = Skin-lightening Behaviours – 6 Months; MHI-SF = Mental Health Inventory (Short Form); BICSI-AF = Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory – Appearance Fixing; BICSI-PRA = Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory – Positive Rational Acceptance; CARSAL = Centre for Appearance Research Salience Scale; CARVAL = Centre for Appearance Research Valence Scale; SOBBS = Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviours Scale; BII-V2 = Bicultural Identity Integration (Version 2); BII-HAR = Bicultural Identity Integration – Harmony vs Conflict; and BII-BLEND = Bicultural Identity Integration – Blendedness vs Compartmentalization.

Table 4. Demographics of Interview Participants (N = 13)

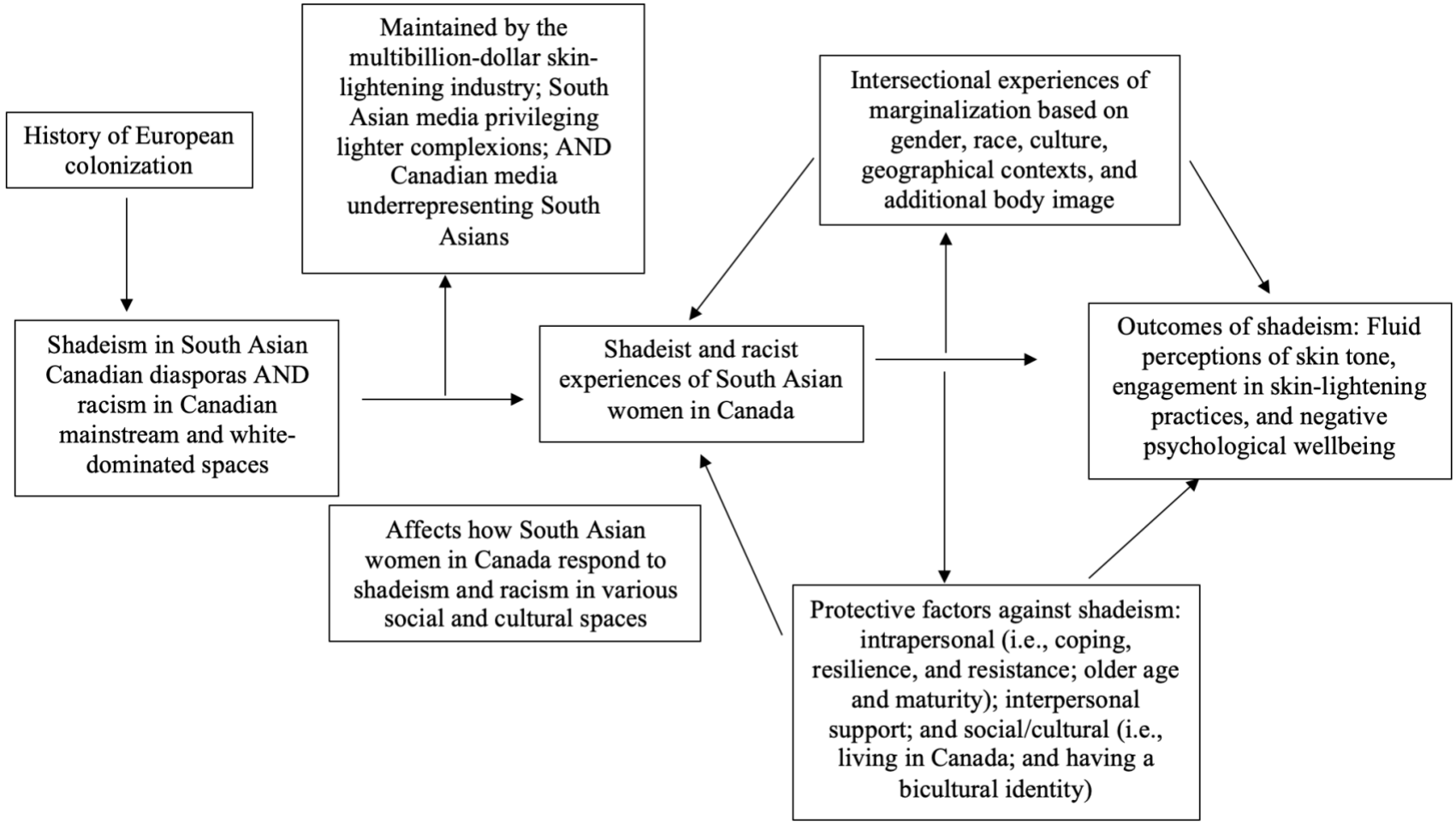
Pseudonym	**Age**	**South Asian Nationality**	**Province**	**Immigration to Canada**
Bunty	22	Indian	Alberta	Yes / 17 years
Anroop	43	Indian	British Columbia	No
Appu	22	Indian	Saskatchewan	Yes / 1 month
Simran	19	Indian	British Columbia	Yes / 17 years
Anu H.	20	Indian/Sri Lankan	Saskatchewan	Yes / 7 years
Jasmin	55	Indian/Pakistani	British Columbia	Yes / 55 years
Fatima	21	Pakistani	Saskatchewan	Yes / 18 years
Tina	22	Bangladeshi	Alberta	Yes / 19 years
Manike	40	Sri Lankan	Saskatchewan	Yes / 10 years
Maya	22	Pakistani	Ontario	Yes / 18 years
Sunu	27	Bangladeshi	Saskatchewan	Yes / 2.5 years
Alex	19	Bangladeshi	Saskatchewan	Yes / 8 years
A.	Unknown	Unknown	Saskatchewan	Unknown

Note. All interview participants reported their gender identity as cisgender women.

Table 5. Interview Themes

Over-arching Themes	**Subthemes**
Colonial origins of shadeism	
Experiences of shadeism	• Interpersonal relationships (i.e., family, relatives, and friends) • Social and cultural spaces • Media portrayals • Intersections of shadeism and other forms of oppression
Protective factors against shadeism	• Intrapersonal (i.e., coping, resilience, resistance, and older age and maturity • Interpersonal (i.e., family members, friends, and romantic partners) • Cultural acceptance (i.e., living in Canada and having a bicultural identity)
Consequences of shadeism	• Fluid perceptions of skin tone • Engagement in skin-lightening practices • Psychological wellbeing

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model on Shadeist and Racist Experiences of South Asian Women in Canada



Appendix A
Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 27-Apr-2021

Certificate of Re-Approval

Application ID:	909
Principal Investigator:	Melanie Morrison Department: Department of Psychology
Locations Where Research Activities are Conducted:	Data from the online survey and face-to-face interviews will be housed at the University of Saskatchewan., Canada
Student(s):	Bidushy Sadika
Funder(s):	
Sponsor:	
Title:	Light and Beautiful? A Mixed-Methods Inquiry on the Experiences and Psychological Outcomes of Shadeism for South Asian Women in Canada.
Approval Effective Date:	30-Apr-2021
Expiry Date:	30-Apr-2022
Acknowledgment Of:	N/A
Review Type:	Delegated Review

* This study, inclusive of all previously approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php.

Digitally Approved by Diane Martz
Chair, Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan

Appendix B

Recruitment Materials: Online Survey

PAWS: Seeking South Asian Canadian Women to Participate in an Online Survey

If you are a South Asian woman living in Canada, and at least 16 years of age, we would love to hear from you!

You are invited to participate in an online survey that focuses on your perceptions of your skin tone, body image, as well as your mental health. The online survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your data will be kept completely anonymous and no personally identifying information will be linked to your data.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Your feelings are important and hearing your voice is critical. By participating in this study, you will help us gain a better understanding of the social messages related to skin complexion that affect South Asian women in Canada.

Please click the following link or share with anyone who you think may qualify:
https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/skintonesurvey

For any questions or concerns, please contact Bidushy Sadika (bidushy.sadika@usask.ca), Master's Candidate at the Department of Psychology or her academic supervisor, Dr. Melanie Morrison (melanie.morrison@usask.ca), Professor at the Department of Psychology.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you!

Twitter

We are seeking South Asian Canadian women for a brief online survey about their perceptions of their skin tone, body image, and psychological wellbeing. To participate, please click the link below: https://surveymonkey.ca/r/skintonesurvey

Facebook

If you are a South Asian woman living in Canada, and at least 16 years of age, we would love to hear from you!

You are invited to participate in an online survey that focuses on your perceptions of your skin tone, body image, cultural identity, as well as your mental health.

At the end of the survey, you will be invited to enter a draw for a chance to win 1 of 5 $25.00 Amazon Gift cards.

The online survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your data will be kept completely anonymous and no personally identifying information will be linked to your data. Your participation in this project is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Your feelings are important and hearing your voice is critical. By participating in this study, you will help us gain a better understanding of the social messages related to skin complexion that affect South Asian women in Canada.

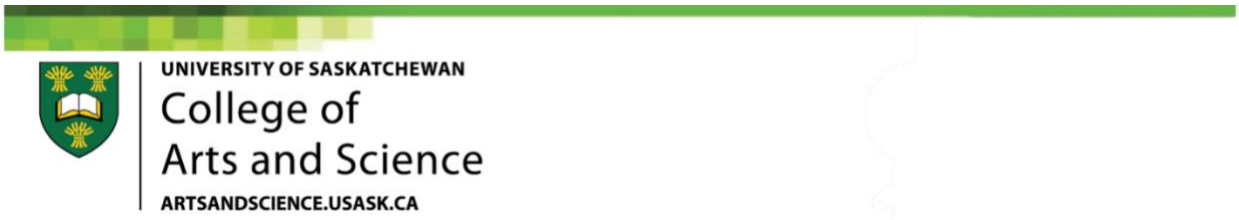
Please click the following link or share with anyone who you think may qualify:
https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/skintonesurvey

Appendix C
Criterion Questions: Ethnicity

1. Which of the following reflect your ethnicity?
    a. Indigenous (e.g., First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
    b. Black (e.g., African, African American, African Canadian, Caribbean)
    c. East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Polynesian)
    d. South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh)
    e. Southeast Asian (e.g., Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese)
    f. West Asian (e.g., Arabian, Armenian, Iranian, Israeli, Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, Turkish)
    g. Latin American (e.g., Mexican, Indigenous Central and South American)
    h. White/Caucasian
    i. Mixed origin (please specify)
    j. Please specify your ethnicity if it is mixed origin, or did not appear on this list.
    _____

2. If you are South Asian, which country are you from?
    a. Afghanistan
    b. Bangladesh
    c. Bhutan
    d. India
    e. Maldives
    f. Nepal
    g. Pakistan
    h. Sri Lanka

Appendix D
Consent Form: Online Survey



You are invited to participate in an online study of your experiences and feelings as a South Asian woman living in Canada. You will be asked questions that address your opinions of your skin complexion and body image, as well as your mental health. You must be at least 16 years of age to participate. Please read this page carefully.

Researchers: Bidushy Sadika, Master of Arts (M.A.) Candidate, Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, bidushy.sadika@usask.ca; Dr. Melanie Morrison, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, melanie.morrison@usask.ca.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of the present study is to develop an understanding of South Asian Canadian women's feelings about their complexion, particularly their skin tone.

Procedures: You will be asked to fill out an online questionnaire, which asks about how you perceive your skin complexion and body image, and your feelings of psychological wellness.

You are free to answer only those questions you are comfortable answering. The online survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role in it by contacting bidushy.sadika@usask.ca.

Potential Risks: For some participants, there may be a feeling of discomfort when asked to recall some of the negative experiences that you might have had. You are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer or exit the browser at any time.

Prior to beginning the survey, please consider downloading this PDF document that includes information of resources for social support. The document contains all emergency resources to contact should you require immediate emotional assistance as well as a list of organizations and social groups you can contact if you would like additional support. As well, you are encouraged to get in touch with the Researchers using their contact information provided above. We would be happy to speak to you about any issues that you may be experiencing due to your participation in our study. At the end of the study, you will receive a debriefing form which will explain the study in more depth. For any questions or concerns you may have, please also feel free to contact the Researchers using the information provided above.

Potential Benefits: Your participation in this study will help to gain a better understanding of the issues and factors surrounding skin complexion that impact the wellness of South Asian women living in Canada. Further, your involvement will enable us to document any stigmatizing

experiences so that we are able to give voice to your experiences, and work toward improving the wellbeing of South Asian female Canadians.

Compensation: Participants are invited to enter a draw for a chance to win one of five $25 Amazon gift cards. (For MTurk participants: Each participant will be provided $1.00 for completing the survey.)

Anonymity and Confidentiality: The online survey has been placed on SurveyMonkey. This tool allows researchers to conduct fully anonymous surveys in which not even IP addresses are gathered. No personally-identifying information will ever be linked to the responses you provide; thus, you will remain anonymous in the database. Further, all responses will be combined together, which means that the researchers have no way of identifying individual respondents.

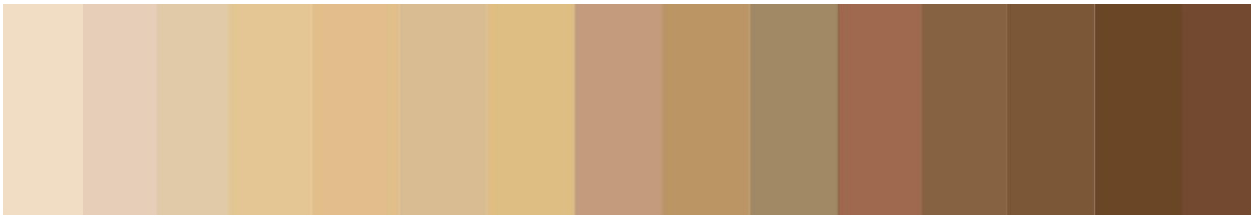
Select the appropriate button.

- o I consent to participate in this study.
- o I do not consent to participate in this study.

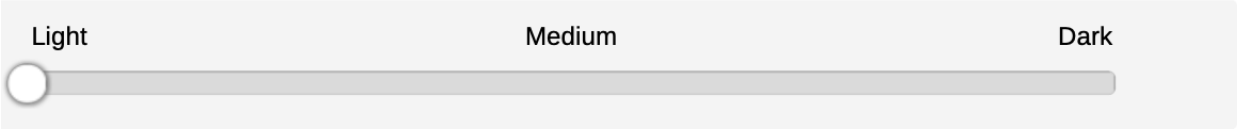
Appendix E

Skin Tone Evaluation

Using the slider provided, please response to the following questions.



1. What is your current skin complexion?



Appendix F

Frequency of Skin-Lightening

Instructions: Skin lightening refers to things people do to lighten one's skin or achieve a generally lighter skin tone. Individuals lighten their skin by engaging in practices such as bleaching or using skin fairness or skin lightening products. Keeping this in mind, please indicate your response to the following questions using the response options provided.

1. Do you lighten your skin at present?
    a. Yes
    b. No

2. How many times in the past 30 days have you lightened your skin?
    a. 1-2 times a week
    b. 3-4 times a week
    c. Everyday
    d. More than once a day
    e. I have not lightened my skin in the past 30 days

3. How many times in the past 6 months have you lightened your skin?
    a. 1-2 times a week
    b. 3-4 times a week
    c. Everyday
    d. More than once a day
    e. I have not lightened my skin in the past 6 months

Appendix G

Mental Health Inventory

Instructions: The next set of questions are about how you feel, and how things have been for you during the past 4 weeks. Please respond to the statements using the following scales to the best of your ability.

Response items:

1. None of the time
2. A little bit of the time
3. Some of the time
4. A good bit of the time
5. Most of the time
6. All of the time

1. Has your daily life been full of things that were interesting to you?
2. Did you feel depressed?
3. Have you felt loved and wanted?
4. Have you been a very nervous person?
5. Have you been in firm control of your behaviour, thoughts, emotions, and feelings?
6. Have you felt tense or high-strung?
7. Have you felt calm or peaceful?
8. Have you felt emotionally stable?
9. Have you felt downhearted and blue?
10. Were you able to relax without difficulty?
11. Have you felt restless, fidgety, or impatient?
12. Have you been moody or brooded about things?
13. Have you felt cheerful and light-hearted?
14. Have you been in low or very low spirits?
15. Were you a happy person?
16. Did you feel you had nothing to look forward to?
17. Have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up?
18. Have you been anxious or worried?

Appendix H

Centre for Appearance Research Salience Scale (CARSAL)

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you are consciously aware of your appearance and physical self, using the response options provided.

Response options:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

1. For me, my appearance is an important part of who I am.
2. I am often aware of the way that I look to other people.
3. In most situations, I find myself aware of the way my face and body look.
4. I often think about the impression that the appearance of my face and body make.
5. I am usually conscious of my appearance.

Appendix I

Centre for Appearance Research Valence Scale (CARVAL)

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you evaluate your appearance in a positive or a negative way, using the response options provided.

Response options:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

1. I am satisfied with my physical appearance.*
2. I don't like the way I look.
3. The way I look makes me feel good about myself.*
4. The way I look makes me feel unattractive.
5. My body and face look pretty much the way I would like.*
6. I feel bad about my body and my appearance.
7. I like the way I look.*
8. My appearance makes me feel attractive.*

Appendix J

Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviours Scale

Instructions: Please indicate your response to each of the following statements, using the response format below.

Response options:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

1. Looking attractive to others is more important to me than being happy with who I am inside.
2. I try to imagine what my body looks like to others (i.e., like I am looking at myself from the outside).
3. How I look is more important to me than how I think or feel.
4. I choose specific clothing or accessories based on how they make my body appear to others.
5. My physical appearance is more important than my personality.
6. When I look in the mirror, I notice areas of my appearance that I think others will view critically.
7. I consider how my body will look to others in the clothing I am wearing.
8. I often think how my body must look to others.
9. My physical appearance says more about who I am than my intellect.
10. How sexually attractive others find me says something about who I am as a person.
11. My physical appearance is more important than my physical abilities.
12. I try to anticipate others' reactions to my physical appearance.
13. My body is what gives me value to other people.
14. I have thoughts about how my body looks to others even when I am alone.

Appendix K

Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory

Instructions: Body Image refers to how we think and feel about our own physical appearance. In the course of everyday life, there are situations and events that occur which can negatively affect our body image. These situations and events are called body image threats or challenges, because they threaten or challenge our ability to feel okay about our looks. People do lots of different things to cope or deal with these challenges or threats.

We would like you to think back upon a situation or situations that negatively affected your opinion about your skin tone. Please briefly explain the situation(s) that you have just thought about, only if you are comfortable sharing:
_____ [comment box provided]

Listed below are some of the ways that people may try to cope with body image threats or challenges. For each item, please think about how much it explains your way of coping with an event or situation that poses a threat or challenge to your feelings about your body image, especially your skin tone.

Using the scale provided and keeping the situation(s) you just described in mind, please indicate how well each way of coping describes what you actually do or would do.

There are no right or wrong answers. It doesn't matter how helpful or unhelpful your ways of coping are. Don't answer based on how you wish you usually reacted. Just be completely truthful.

Response Options:
1 = Definitely *Not* Like Me
2 = Mostly *Not* Like Me
3 = Mostly Like Me
4 = Definitely Like Me

<u>Appearance Fixing</u>
1. I do something to try to look more attractive.
2. I spend extra time trying to fix what I don't like about my looks.
3. I think about what I should do to change my looks.
4. I compare my appearance to that of physically attractive people.
5. I make a special effort to hide or "cover up" what's troublesome about my looks.
6. I make a special effort to look my best.
7. I think about how I could "cover up" what's troublesome about my looks.
8. I fantasize about looking different.
9. I spend more time in front of the mirror.
10. I seek reassurance about my looks from other people.

<u>Positive Rational Acceptance</u>
1. I remind myself that I will feel better after awhile.

2. I tell myself that I am probably just overreacting to the situation.
3. I tell myself that the situation will pass.
4. I tell myself that I probably look better than I feel that I do.
5. I remind myself of my good qualities.
6. I try to figure out why I am challenged or threatened by the situation.
7. I tell myself that there are more important things than what I look like.
8. I tell myself that I'm just being irrational about things.
9. I tell myself that the situation is not that important.
10. I react by being especially patient with myself.
11. I consciously do something that might make me feel good about myself as a person.

Appendix L

Bicultural Identity Integration [Version 2]

Instructions: Please indicate your response to the following statements, using the response options provided.

Response options:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

Cultural Harmony vs. Conflict

1. I find it easy to harmonize South Asian and Canadian cultures.
2. I rarely feel conflicted about being bicultural.
3. I find it easy to balance both South Asian and Canadian cultures.
4. I do not feel trapped between the South Asian and Canadian cultures.
5. I feel torn between the South Asian and Canadian cultures.*
6. Being bicultural means having two cultural forces pulling on me at the same time.*
7. I feel that my South Asian and Canadian cultures are incompatible.*
8. I feel conflicted between the Canadian and South Asian ways of doing things.*
9. I feel like someone moving between two cultures.*
10. I feel caught between the South Asian and Canadian cultures.*

Cultural Blendedness vs. Compartmentalization

11. I cannot ignore the South Asian or Canadian side of me.
12. I feel South Asian and Canadian at the same time.
13. I relate better to a combined South Asian-Canadian culture than to South Asian or Canadian culture alone.
14. I feel South Asian-Canadian.
15. I feel part of a combined culture.
16. I do not blend my South Asian and Canadian cultures.*
17. I keep South Asian and Canadian cultures separate.*

Appendix M

Comments: Online Survey

If you wish to comment on this survey or the perceptions surrounding skin complexion in South Asian cultures, please use the common box below:

_____ [comment box provided]

Appendix N

Debriefing Form: Online Survey

Thank you for participating in this study! We hope you enjoyed the experience. This form provides background about our research to help you learn more about why we are doing this study. Please feel free to ask any questions or to comment on any aspect of the study.

You have just participated in a research study entitled ***Lighter-Skinned and Beautiful? Investigating Shadeism Amongst South Asian Women in Canada*** conducted by Bidushy Sadika, bidushy.sadika@usask.ca.

The purpose of the study is to look at the relationship between skin colour perception and psychological wellness amongst South Asian women residing in Canada, and whether factors such as appearance-related concerns or sense of connection with one's culture influence this association.

We believe that promoting equity for women, irrespective of their skin complexion, is our responsibility so that we can help in making our society a welcoming place for everyone. If you are interested in learning more about the topic of the effects of idealizing fair skin complexion for South Asian women, we encourage you to follow the links to some of the latest resources we have provided:

- Bakhshi, S., & Baker, A. (2011). 'I think a fair girl would have better marriage prospects than a dark one': British Indian adults´ perceptions of physical appearance ideals. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, *7*(3), 458-486.
- Hunter, M. L. (2002). "If you're light you're alright" light skin color as social capital for women of color. *Gender & Society*, *16*(2), 175-193.
- Sahay, S., & Piran, N. (1997). Skin-color preferences and body satisfaction among South Asian- Canadian and European-Canadian female university students. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *137*(2), 161-171.

As data collection is ongoing, please do not discuss this project with anyone. The main reason for this is that your comments could influence the expectations, and therefore, the performance of a future participant, which would bias our data. However, feel free to share the survey link with anybody you think may qualify to participate in the study.

https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/skintonesurvey

If you have questions or concerns as a result of the study or would like to further discuss the issues explored therein, you are welcome to contact the researchers, Bidushy Sadika (bidushy.sadika@usask.ca), Master's of Arts (M.A.) Candidate in Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan, as well as Dr. Melanie Morrison (melanie.morrison@usask.ca), Professor of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan.

Please hit "print screen" to obtain a copy for your records. Alternatively, you may email the researchers using the contact information above, and a copy will be sent to you.
We thank you so much for participating! Without you, this research would not be possible.

Appendix O

Contact Information Page

Thank you once again for completing the survey. We invite you to enter your email below if you would like to enter a draw for 1 of 5 Amazon gift cards of $25.00 each and/or are interested to participate in a follow-up study.

Your name and email will NOT be linked to your responses to the survey you just participated in. All your personal information will be stored securely in a separate file.

1. Do you want to enter your name for the draw?
    a. No
    b. Yes
    Please enter your email address: _____

2. Would you be interested in participating in similar studies in the future?
    a. No
    b. Yes
    Please enter your email address: _____

Appendix P

Recruitment Materials: Virtual Interviews

Invitation to Participants Who Provided Their Contact Information

Dear Invitee,

We hope you are doing well. In an online survey you recently responded to, entitled "*Lighter-Skinned and Beautiful? Investigating Shadeism Amongst South Asian Women in Canada*," you showed an interest in participating a follow-up study.

We would like to invite you to share your experiences with us! We are interested in learning more about your perceptions and feelings surrounding your skin tone and the complexions of South Asian women as well.

Your participation should take approximately 30-40 minutes and include a face-to-face interview through WebEx video conferencing.

As a token of appreciation for your time and contribution, you would receive a $15 Tim Horton's gift card.

Please be assured that all interviews are completely confidential. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any point for any reason without explanation or penalty.

For more information about this study, or to participate in this interview, please reply back to this email.

WE HOPE YOU JOIN US!

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Bidushy Sadika, BA (Honours)
Master's Candidate
Department of Psychology
University of Saskatchewan
bidushy.sadika@usask.ca

Dr. Melanie Morrison
Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Saskatchewan
melanie.morrison@usask.ca

Follow-Up Email Requesting to Sign Consent Form and Read Interview Questions

Attach a consent form and a document with interview questions to the email

Hello _____,

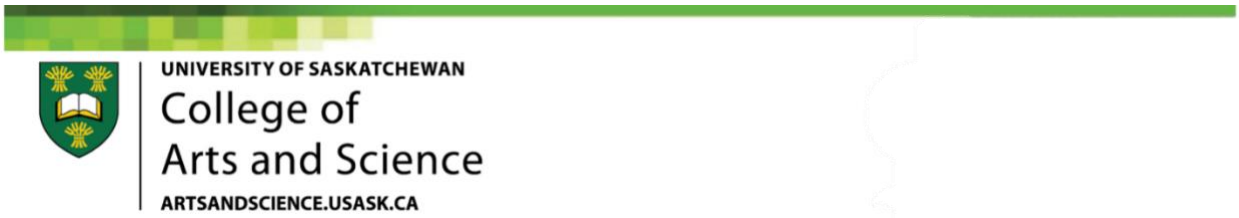
Thank you for your response and interest to participate in the interview. Please find attached the consent form and a list of interview questions. Please read the documents thoroughly.

If you still are interested to participate after reading the documents, I request you if you can: 1) sign the consent form and return it to me in a response email; and 2) indicate your availability for the upcoming weeks. I will try my best to schedule the interview according to your availability.

Thank you once again and have a good day.

Regards,
Bidushy Sadika

Appendix Q
Consent Form: Virtual Interviews



You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: Lighter-Skinned and Beautiful? Investigating Shadeism Amongst South Asian Women in Canada (Phase II)

You are invited to participate in an interview that focuses on your perceptions, feelings, and experiences surrounding your skin tone. You will be asked about the impact of interpersonal, social, and cultural relationships on your skin tone perception, and how these experiences have affected your wellbeing. You must be at least 16 years of age to participate. Please read this page carefully.

Researchers: Bidushy Sadika, Graduate Master's Student, Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, bidushy.sadika@usask.ca; Dr. Melanie Morrison, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, melanie.morrison@usask.ca.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of the present study is to develop an understanding of interpersonal, social, and cultural factors that influence skin colour perception and wellness of Canadian South Asian women.

Procedures: The study will be composed of one interview lasting approximately 30-40 minutes. The interviews will be recorded with your permission; you may request that the recorder be turned off at any time without giving a reason. You may indicate your permission for the interview to be audio recorded by signing this consent form.

You will be interviewed about your current level of experiences and perceptions concerning your skin complexion, as well as interpersonal relationships and social and cultural experiences that may have influenced your perceptions. You are free to answer only those questions you are comfortable answering. Upon completion of the interview, you will be asked if you would like to review your transcript. If you wish to do so, we will e-mail the transcript to you once the interview is transcribed. You may request to add, alter, or delete information as appropriate. Along with the transcript, we will send you a transcript release form. This can be returned to us via e-mail, or if you prefer we can meet with you again to obtain your signature. If you do not provide us with feedback for your transcript or your signed copy of the transcript release form within two weeks, we will assume that the transcript is acceptable. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role. As well, please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role in it by contacting bidushy.sadika@usask.ca.

Potential Risks: For some participants, there may be a feeling of discomfort when asked to recall some of the negative experiences that you might have had. You are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer, or exit the browser at any time. You will be provided with emergency resources to contact should you require immediate emotional assistance as well as a list of organizations and social groups you can contact if you would like additional support. As well, you are encouraged to get in touch with the researchers using their contact information provided above. We would be happy to speak to you about any issues that you may be experiencing due to your participation in our study. At the end of the study, you will receive a debriefing form which will explain the study in more depth. For any questions or concerns you may have, please also feel free to contact the researchers using the information provided above.

Potential Benefits: Your participation in this study will allow us to gain a better understanding of the issues and factors surrounding skin complexion that affect the mental health of South Asian women living in Canada. Further, your involvement will enable us to document any stigmatizing experiences so that we are able to give voice to your experiences, and work toward improving the well-being of South Asian women in Canada.

Compensation: Each participant will receive a $15 Tim Horton's Gift Card for their time and contribution to our study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: If you consent to participate in this study, your signed consent form will be stored separately from the data. Your data will be kept completely confidential, and no personally identifying information will be linked to your data. Your data will be reported under a pseudonym, and any personally identifying information will be removed. Any form of e-mail communication will be permanently deleted after we have recorded and securely stored any information that has been exchanged. The data and consent forms will be stored securely at the researchers' password-protected computers. As there are instances where the research is published in an academic journal and/or presented at a professional conference, the data will be stored for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Storage of Data: The data will be kept on researchers' password-encrypted computers for a minimum of five years. Please be assured that the data will be permanently destroyed without possibility of recovery after the five years. Any identifying information will not be included with the data. Only aggregate data will be used in any presentations about the research or in any journal articles.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is absolutely voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you feel comfortable with. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty or loss of compensation. You will no longer have an option to withdraw your data under two circumstances: 1) once you review the transcript, and email us your signed transcript release form; or 2) if you do not respond to us within two weeks after we email you the transcript, and we assume that the transcript is acceptable.

Follow up: To obtain results from the study, please contact Bidushy Sadika, Graduate Master's Student, bidushy.sadika@usask.ca.

Questions or Concerns: If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above. This project was reviewed on ethical grounds by the U of S Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Research Ethics Office toll free at 1-888-966-2975 or ethics.office@usask.ca. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact Bidushy Sadika at the email address provided at the top of this form and more details will be provided. You may also choose to send the researchers an e-mail to receive a summary of the results.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I also give permission to the researcher to audio record my interview.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix R

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. How do you evaluate your skin complexion?
2. Do you use skin lightening products?
    a. If no, can you explain why you choose not to use these products?
    b. If yes, why do you use these products?

Category 1: Individual Perceptions of Skin Complexion

1. Have you ever received any social or cultural messages about your skin tone?
    a. Can you tell me a bit about them?
    b. When do you recall first receiving these messages?
    c. Where do you think that these messages originate from?
    d. Do these messages affect you as a person? If yes, how?
    e. How do you cope with these negative messages about your skin tone?

Category 2: Impact of Interpersonal Relationships

2. Have you ever felt pressured by your family to use skin fairness (lightening/whitening) products?
    a. Felt this from extended families or relatives, for example, uncle, aunts, and cousins?
    b. What about your friends or acquaintances?
    c. From any romantic partners if you have ever been in a relationship?

Category 3: Social Experiences and Skin Tone Perception

3. Have you ever felt targeted in the following places because of your skin complexion? Can you tell me a bit about that?
    a. School/University/Workplaces
    b. Cultural or ethnic spaces
    c. White-dominated spaces

Category 4: Media Messages

4. Have you ever felt affected by the marketing of skin fairness products?
    a. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
5. Did the marketing of skin fairness products affect how you perceive your skin tone?
    a. If so, then how did it affect your perceptions?
6. What social messages do you think are being given to people, primarily women, from the marketing of skin fairness products?

Category 5: Identity

7. Have your perceptions about your skin tone affected the development of your identity throughout your life?
    a. Affected your childhood?
    b. Affected your transition to high school and the time in high school?
    c. Affected your university and/or work life?
    d. Any other aspects you would like to mention?

Appendix S

Debriefing Form: Virtual Interviews

Thank you for participating in this study! We hope you enjoyed the experience. This form provides background about our research to help you learn more about why we are doing this study. Please feel free to ask any questions or to comment on any aspect of the study.

You have just participated in a research study entitled ***Lighter-Skinned and Beautiful? Investigating Shadeism Amongst South Asian Women in Canada?*** conducted by Bidushy Sadika, bidushy.sadika@usask.ca

In the second phase of this study, I explore whether individual (e.g., coping), interpersonal (i.e., relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners), and social (i.e., lived experiences in school or work, and ethnic communities) factors play significant role in the lives of Canadian South Asian women who may be marginalized for their skin complexion by their culture and/or the society.

As you know, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you so wish, you may withdraw after reading this debriefing form, at which point all records of your participation will be destroyed. You will not be penalized if you withdraw.

I believe that promoting equity for women, irrespective of their skin complexion, as my responsibility so that I can help in making my society a welcoming place for everyone. If you are interested in learning more about the topic of the effects of idealizing fair skin complexion for South Asian women, I encourage you to follow the links to some of the latest resources we have provided:

- Bakhshi, S., & Baker, A. (2011). 'I think a fair girl would have better marriage prospects than a dark one': British Indian adults´ perceptions of physical appearance ideals. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, *7*(3), 458-486.
- Hunter, M. L. (2002). "If you're light you're alright" light skin color as social capital for women of color. *Gender & society*, *16*(2), 175-193.
- Sahay, S., & Piran, N. (1997). Skin-color preferences and body satisfaction among South Asian-Canadian and European-Canadian female university students. *The Journal of social psychology*, *137*(2), 161-171.

As data collection is ongoing, please do not discuss this project with anyone. The main reason for this is that your comments could influence the expectations, and therefore, the performance of a future participant, which would bias my data.

If you have questions or concerns as a result of the study or would like to further discuss the issues explored therein, you are welcome to contact the researchers, Bidushy Sadika (bidushy.sadika@usask.ca), Graduate Master's Student at the University of Saskatchewan, as well as Dr. Melanie Morrison (melanie.morrison@usask.ca), Professor of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan.

Please hit "print screen" to obtain a copy for your records. Alternatively, you may email the researchers using the contact information above, and a copy will be sent to you.

Again, we thank you so much for participating! Without you, this research would not be possible.

Appendix T
Resource Document

Emergency Resources
University of Saskatchewan

1. University's Student Wellness Centre: 306-966-5768 (student.wellness@usask.ca)
2. USSU Women's Centre: 306-966-6980 (womens.centre@ussu.ca)

Crisis Support

1. Crisis Services Canada (24/7): 1-833-456-4566
2. Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service (24/7): 1-306-933-6200

Organizations for Additional Support

1. South Asian Women's Centre: http://www.sawc.org/
2. Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA): http://cassa.on.ca/
3. Canadian Women's Foundation: https://www.canadianwomen.org/
4. National Council of Women of Canada: http://www.ncwcanada.com/
5. Saskatoon Open Door Society: https://www.sods.sk.ca/
6. Saskatoon Women's Community Coalition: http://www.saskwcc.org/
7. International Women of Saskatoon (IWS): https://iwssaskatoon.org/
8. Saskatoon Women's Network (SWN): https://www.swnsaskatoon.com/
9. Immigrant, Refugee and Visible Minority Women of Saskatchewan: http://www.cwhn.ca/en/node/15963

Appendix U

Transcript Release Form

I,_____, have reviewed the completed transcript of my interview, and have been provided the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Bidushy Sadika. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Bidushy Sadika to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____ Name of Participant

_____ Signature of Participant

_____ Date

_____ Signature of Researcher

Appendix V
Demographics

Thank you so much for your time and patience. We are almost done. To complete the study, please tell us a bit about yourself, and remember that all your responses below are confidential.

3. Please indicate your age.
   _____

4. Which best describes your gender identity?
   a. Woman
   b. Man
   c. Trans woman
   d. Trans man
   e. Agender
   f. Gender nonbinary
   g. Gender fluid
   h. Gender nonconforming
   i. Two-Spirit
   j. Please specify your current gender identity if it did not appear on the list.
      _____

5. What is your sexual orientation?
   a. Lesbian
   b. Gay
   c. Bisexual
   d. Hetetoersexual/straight
   e. Asexual
   f. Queer
   g. Pansexual
   h. Please specify your sexual orientation if it did not appear on the list.
      _____

6. What is the highest level of education you have obtained?
   a. Elementary school
   b. Junior high school
   c. High school
   d. Diploma/College
   e. Undergraduate degree
   f. Master's degree
   g. PhD degree
   h. Professional designation (please specify)
      _____

7. Please indicate your annual household income.
   a. Less than $10,000

b. $10,001 to $20,000
c. $20,001 to $30,000
d. $30,001 to $40,000
e. $40,001 to $50,000
f. $50,001 to $60,000
g. $60,001 to $70,000
h. $70,001 to $80,000
i. $80,001 to $90,000
j. $90,001 to $100,000
k. Above $100,000

8. Please indicate your relationship status.
    a. Single (never married)
    b. Married
    c. Common law
    d. Widowed
    e. Divorced
    f. Separated

9. Were you born in Canada?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        Please indicate the name of the country you were born in: _____
        In which year did you migrate to Canada? _____

10. Do you currently live in Canada?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Which province or territory do you currently live in?
    a. Alberta
    b. British Columbia
    c. Manitoba
    d. New Brunswick
    e. Newfoundland and Labrador
    f. Northwest Territories
    g. Nova Scotia
    h. Nunavut
    i. Ontario
    j. Prince Edward Island
    k. Quebec
    l. Saskatchewan
    m. Yukon

12. How many years have you lived in Canada?
[box response] _____ years

13. How many years have you lived in your home country?
[box response] _____ years

Appendix W

Email to South Asian Organizations for Potential Assistance in Recruitment

Hello,

I am Bidushy Sadika, a M.A. candidate in Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. My academic supervisor is Dr. Melanie Morrison, who also directs the Saskatchewan Equity, Equality and Diversity (SEED) Lab (https://research-groups.usask.ca/morrison/). In the SEED lab, we conduct research on social issues relevance to sexual and gender minority individuals, women, and Indigenous Persons.

As part of my Master's research, I am conducting an online survey, for which I wish to invite South Asian women living in Canada to share their experiences related to their skin tone, body image, and mental health. The survey includes questions about South Asian Canadian women's skin lightening behaviours, appearance-related and body image concerns, mental health, and cultural identity.

This research aims to reach South Asian women who live in a wide range of communities across Canada, including those often neglected by academic research. I plan to draw conclusions pertinent to all demographics of South Asian women in Canada, leading to a positive impact for these women.

Therefore, I need help in making my online survey available to South Asian women all over Canada who are willing to participate. If you are interested to know more about my study and/or assist me in recruiting participants, I would be glad to send you a PDF copy of the survey and the survey link.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Bidushy Sadika